

F 129

.B4 R65





20

LETTER OF TRANSMISSION

Charles Mulford Robinson, A. M.

Specialist in Municipal Aesthetics

and

Town and City Planning

Reference: Denver, Denver, Colorado Springs, Columbus, O.
St. Joseph, Mo., Fort Wayne, Los Angeles, Oakland, Santa Barbara,
San Jose, Honolulu, Waterbury, N.Y., Dubuque, Waterloo,
Cedar Rapids, Ia., Ridgewood, N. J., Jamesstown, N. Y., etc.

65 So. Washington Street

Rochester, N. Y.

The Mercantile-Press Club,
Binghamton, N. Y.

August 30,
1911.

Gentlemen:-

In accordance with your request, as formally communicated by your Secretary, I have made a study of Binghamton, with a view to suggesting physical changes which will both better the present city and prepare it for the growth that lies ahead.

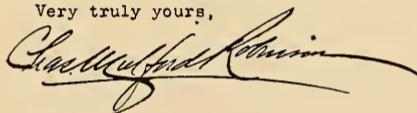
Herewith I have the honor to submit the result of this study. Throughout it, I have endeavored not to lose sight of the size and resources of the city, and in all the suggestions I have made an effort to be practical. If there be felt the lack of any one grandiose improvement scheme, there may be satisfaction in the thought that everything which is proposed can, in no very distant future, be done in Binghamton.

There will be found some severe criticisms, as duty required of me, but the constructive portion of the task has been a labor of love, owing to the natural attractiveness of the city. The fact, also, that so strong an organization of energetic business men made the request for such a study was additional inspiration.

In closing, let me acknowledge with appreciation the courtesies and assistance extended to me by yourselves and many other Binghamtonians, the ready co-operation of the city officials with whom I came in contact - especially of the City Engineer; the untiring helpfulness of your Secretary, Mr. Clarence L. Meacham; and the kindly treatment of the press.

With every best wish for the intelligent progress of Binghamton, and with every confidence that the wishes will be realized, I am,

Very truly yours,



BETTER BINGHAMTON

*A Report
to*

THE MERCANTILE-PRESS CLUB
OF BINGHAMTON · N · Y ·

SEPTEMBER 1911



by

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

F129
B4R65

MERCANTILE-PRESS CLUB BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

OFFICERS 1911

B. F. WELDEN	President
W. J. MOON	Vice President
C. W. YEOMANS	Secretary and Treasurer
C. L. MEACHAM	Executive Secretary

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE OF "BETTER BINGHAMTON"

GEO. C. SALMON	Chairman
FRANK H. BEACH	C. L. MEACHAM

BOARD OF GOVERNORS 1911

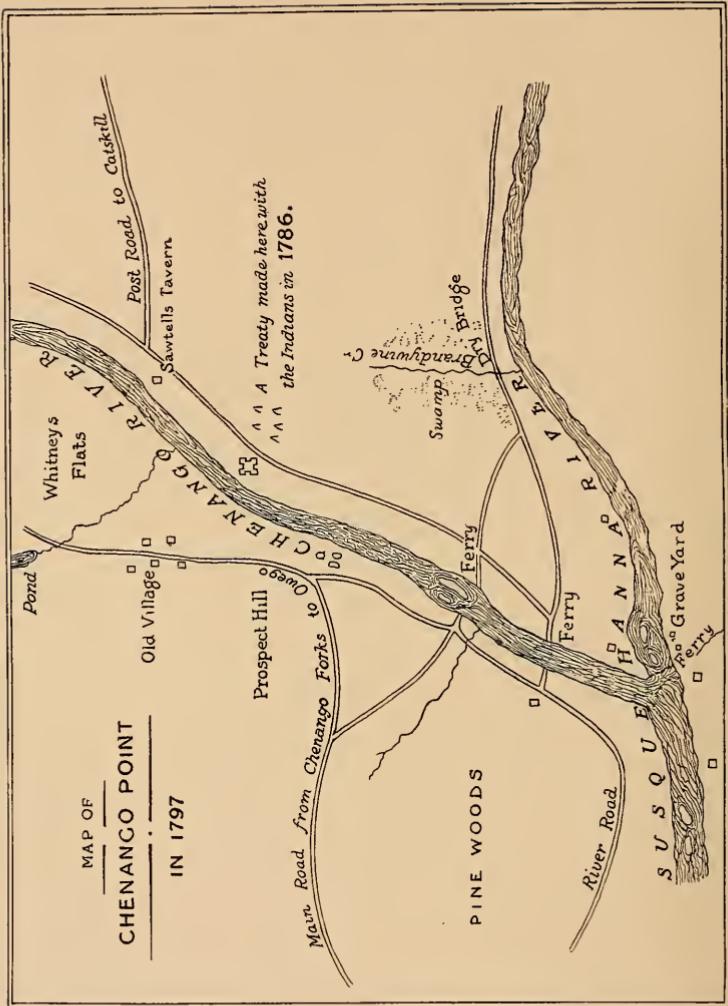
C. W. BENNETT	FRANK H. BEACH
E. N. ABBOTT	HAROLD L. HART
WILLIS SHARPE KILMER	ROBT. H. ROSE
F. J. BAYLESS	J. B. HADSELL, JR.
DANA B. HINMAN	FRANK E. HARRIS
HIRAM GOLDSMITH	ALONZO ROBERSON

Copyright 1911 by Mercantile-Press Club
Binghamton, N. Y.

C O N T E N T S

	Page
I. THE SURVEY.	
1. THE BEGINNINGS OF BINGHAMTON.....	13
2. THE CITY'S SITE	17
3. THE CITY'S PROGRESS, PROMISE AND PRESENT	21
II. THE PROBLEM	29
III. NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	
1. ELEMENTARY NEEDS.	
(Paving, Sidewalks, Curbs, Care of Trees, Schoolyard Planting, Narrower Roadways on Minor Streets, Improvement of Grand Boulevard, Court Street Improvements, Public Market, Betterment of Railroad Entrance)	33
2. THE STREET PLAN.	
(Advantages and Disadvantages of Binghamton Plan, Chenango Street, Carroll Street, Ferry Street, Isbell Street, A New Bridge, Industrial Districts, LeRoy Street, Highland Avenue, Grand Boulevard, Street Jogs, Supervising Subdivisions, Street Grades).....	50
3. PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND PLEASURE DRIVES.	
(Court House Square, Schubert Street Triangle, Howard Park, Athletic Fields, North Bank of Susquehanna, The Point, South Side Park, Banks of the Chenango, Rivers and Bridges, Playgrounds, Ross and Ely Parks, DeRussey Street and Park Avenue)	67
IV. WAYS AND MEANS—Conclusion.....	97





Reproduction of Map made in 1797, showing Original Survey of Site of Binghamton

1. The Beginnings of Binghamton



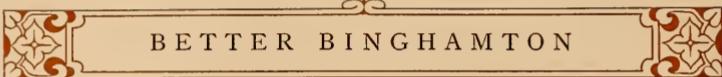
HERE was no Binghamton until there had been Bingham, the pioneer landowner. But before his day the Indians had followed, by canoe and trail, the two beautiful rivers of which the junction point is the heart of modern Binghamton. Even then the valleys of the Susquehanna and Chenango were highways, and a small Tuscarora village was at The Point.

After the revolutionary war, the Oneidas and Tuscaroras (in 1785) released to the State of New York the site of the present city; and the next year the State issued a patent to William Bingham, James Wilson and Robert L. Hooper, containing upwards of 30,000 acres lying on both sides of the Susquehanna, from Union to Kirkwood. Four years later, the owners divided their property, the eastern portion going to Bingham.

William Bingham had been a successful merchant in Philadelphia and was now a great landed proprietor. He engaged Joshua Whitney as his agent, or factor. It was in 1800, when he was twenty-seven years old, that Whitney took charge of the patent.

A settlement had already begun on the west bank of the Chenango, at the foot of Mt. Prospect. But Whitney, says William F. Seward, "accomplished what kings and conquerors have sometimes failed to do—he changed the seat of government, he persuaded a free and sovereign citizenship to move from 'up the river' to Chenango Point. So easy was it to found a city! Or in other words he induced the first settlers (and perhaps some of them were squatters!) to move their homes, their altars and their fires from outside to inside the boundaries of the Bingham Patent."

As Mr. Seward tells the story, Whitney "had learned the exact location of a bridge to be built across the Chenango and dropped into Keeler's tavern to tell the news. 'Boys,' he said, 'you had better stop building here, the village will be built down where the bridge is built,' and the 'boys' then and there agreed to have a 'chopping bee' the next day and make a clearing for the coming of the bridge. The next morning Joshua Whitney, Selah Squires and four other men took their axes and floated down stream in a canoe, landing at an elm tree on the east side of the river."



BETTER BINGHAMTON

The site of the town was surveyed at the junction of the two rivers, on the line of the great Western road, then being opened. Court and Water Streets were the first to be opened; the bridge was built where Joshua Whitney had said it would be; and three-quarter acre lots, as first laid out, were sold at \$20, and corner lots at something more. In 1802 the first Court House was established, on Court Street, about opposite the present structure; this event determining the triumph of the settlement at Chenango Point over that up the river.

But even "Chenango Pint," as the settlement, which was first known as Twin Elms, was now called, was not a very important or impressive community. It was really little more than a clearing—a settlement in the forest—with less than 200 inhabitants in 1810, and with their "faith and hope the main asset" of the town. That is a thing to note. For that early faith and hope resulted in a town plan. In 1808 Roswell Marshall had made the survey of the village, platting carefully laid out streets on paper. The only real streets were Water and Court, between the Court House and the Chenango River, and south of Court Street. But he called it the Village of Binghamton and the town as we know it to-day had commenced.

After that, progress followed the normal course. Indian trails were widened into rough wagon roads. The stage coach came, attaining, before its decline, to the glory of four horses. Then came the canal and at last the railroads. The town kept growing and growing; but we do not hear of any comprehensive planning for it after a general survey which was made in 1835 by William Wentz. Through all the years, here a street and there a street have been added, as occasion has arisen; but there has been no attempt to remodel the village and adapt it to the larger future that was becoming assured—no pause to take stock and consider what changes Binghamton needed to adjust it to new conditions such as its founders had never dreamed of, and to fit it for new victories, and for a higher, larger service to its residents and even to the world than had been in the vision of the pioneers. That privilege has been reserved to crown the faith and hope of the present generation, a hundred years later. In looking into the future, citizens of to-day may be likened to a second race of far seeing pioneers.

BIN CHI A M T O N

A. View of Court Street from the Cheraango Bridge to the Court House, taken June 4th 1810.



THE BEGINNINGS OF BINGHAMTON

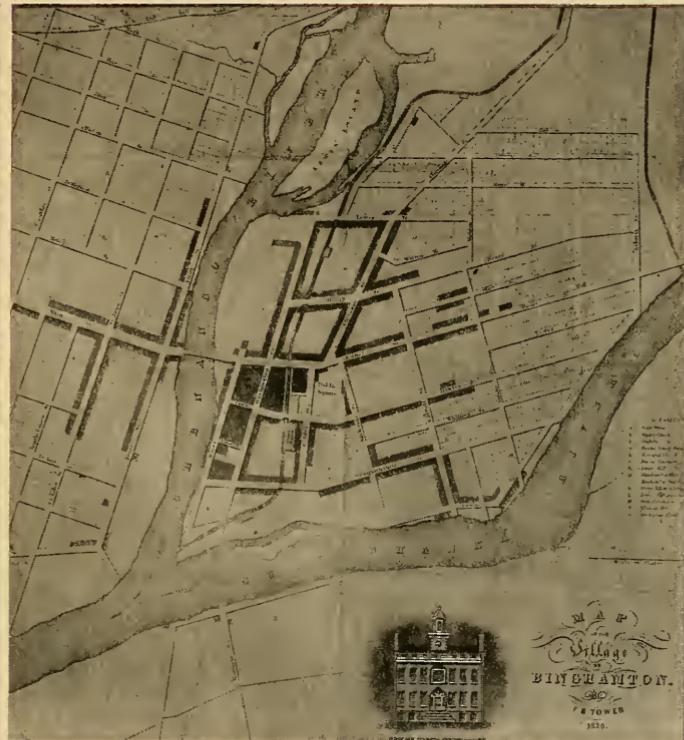


Photo Reproduction of Map of the Village of Binghamton, made by F. S. Tower, in 1836





2. The City's Site



INGHAMTON began at the confluence of the Susquehanna and Chenango rivers, and the neck of land between these rivers is still the heart of the city—its business center. Across the Susquehanna, up and down the river, and up the valley of the Chenango have spread the residences. Rolling hills from five to eight hundred feet high are behind them. Thus is Binghamton a valley city, hill encircled.

The Chenango, flowing from the north, fairly bisects the major portion of the town, for the hills come so close to the south side of the Susquehanna that as yet few streets have been laid out on that side. To the north of the Susquehanna the hills stand back from the river, leaving a valley a mile and a quarter in breadth for a distance of four miles west of the Chenango. East of the Chenango, the valley narrows quickly, so that at a distance of two miles there is space only for the river, the railroads and the two highways. On one of the hills that close the valley at this end



BETTER BINGHAMTON

is the State Hospital. To the north, the valley of the Chenango is broad and low, save for a short distance close to town, where Mt. Prospect comes almost to the river's edge on its west bank.

The term valley as applied to the site of Binghamton is used relatively, with reference to the encircling hills. The floor is not level, nor of uniform slope. West of the Chenango, where is the most extensive residence section, the contours are quite irregular, terraces and depressions alternating in such fashion as to afford considerable local variety of topography. The railroads have not followed the twistings of the rivers but, taking bee lines through the valley, have left most of the city riverbanks free from tracks—a condition as fortunate as it is rare. Between the railroad lines and the rivers, the bulk of the city has been built up.

Important railroad crossings always set barriers to community development. The location of the railroads in Binghamton, comparatively out of the way though they are, has divided the city into several clearly defined districts. The established character of these and their definitely marked bounds are fundamental facts that must greatly influence all thought of the city's progress.

There is, for example, the business district. This is a quadrangle about three-quarters of a mile by half a mile, the longer distance being east and west. Three sides are bounded by the rivers and the fourth by the railroads. That business does not now occupy the whole of this district is of little moment. The important fact is that the limits of the business district seem definitely set—as definitely as they are in Pittsburgh, where great congestion has resulted. The condition, however, is not usual in cities, and is extremely interesting—with both advantages and disadvantages. It is to be added that the business area is well above flood danger, and is comparatively level.

South of the Susquehanna, where there is sufficient population to make a fair sized village, there are no railroads. We have a



THE CITY'S SITE

community shut off from the greater portion of the town by the broad river, but on land that rises quickly and picturesquely from the river, and with nothing to fear from railroads or manufacturing. Again an unusual condition!

North of the Susquehanna, and west of the Chenango, the railroads, paralleling the former about a mile from its bank, have divided the city into two districts that are clearly defined. That between the roads and the Susquehanna is an attractive residence section of the better sort; that to the north of them is a narrow strip against the foothills, mainly given over to small homes, containing a large foreign element and housing many of the factory employees of Binghamton.

The area east of the Chenango and north of the main lines of the railroads is cut by the branch roads that come down from the north so that its characteristics are not as well established.

The two rivers that play so important a part in the physical characterization of Binghamton are subject to seasonal fluctuations of fifteen feet or more. Consequently very little building has been attempted where the banks are low. At Wall Street, Water Street, Conklin Avenue, South Street and Emerson Place, where they are high, thoroughfares have been laid out so close to the margin as to discourage building on the shallow lots. Now and then a shack is found; but for the most part the strip contains no buildings. Front Street, which parallels the Chenango on the West, however, lies for most of its length far enough back from the river to leave long gardens behind the houses even at flood season. Consequently it has had a high class development, and its character is so fixed that even when turns of the river bring the stream near the street, unsightly developments have not been suffered. It will be perceived that for the most part the river banks are not only free from railroad tracks but from structures of any sort.

BETTER BINGHAMTON

As to the hills, they terminate the vista of almost every street and form the background of every view, and so are of greater conspicuousness than are the rivers. They are only partly cultivated. The light patches of fields of grain alternate with the dark shadows of woodlands in a summer mosaic of wonderful beauty. Their contours are exquisitely moulded, in sweeping curves. They engirdle the city with a natural loveliness of the softest, gentlest, most unwearying kind. Of no city is the hackneyed phrase more accurate than of Binghamton, that it nestles in the hills.



3. City's Progress, Promise and Present



HERE has been nothing spectacular about the growth of Binghamton. Its quiet beginning has been described. Since then the progress, considered decade by decade, has been fairly steady, uneventful in any dramatic sense, as if the benediction of the hills had rested upon the city. It has grown like a healthy, happy child, prospering as it grew, and taking little thought of a serious to-morrow.

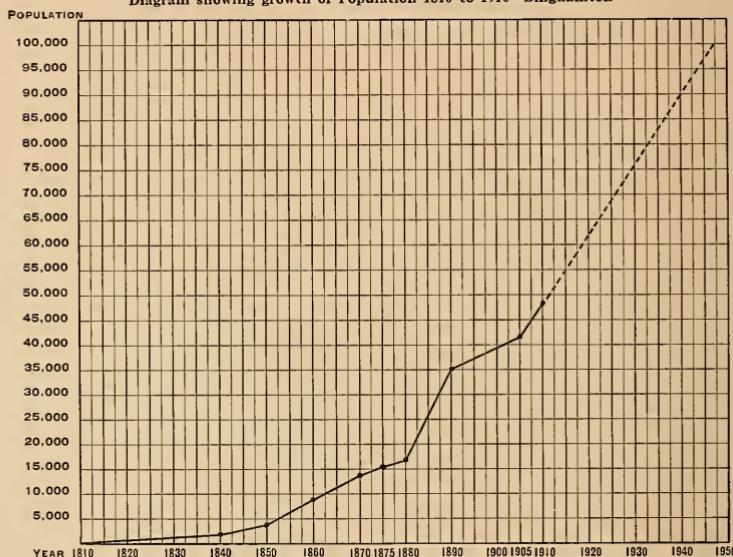
The readiest measure of growth is offered by population figures. It is interesting, putting these in diagrammatic form, to observe the resulting curve and from that to prognosticate the future, even should only the progress of the past continue. Many conditions conspire to-day to promise more rapid growth in the near future than the city has ever known; but it is clear that if all promises failed, the time is not distant when Binghamton will be a comparatively large city, absorbing for building purposes all the available land within the present limits and reaching up into the hills. It is perfectly clear that with the limitations which nature has imposed to the indefinite expansion of the city's area, the time is none too early for a consideration of future needs. If any land is to be saved from building, it must be determined now; if any streets are to be changed, there is no time to lose in reaching the decisions. If there are ultimately to be good transit facilities to outlying sections, we must plan for them at once. It may not be necessary actually to acquire all needed lands now, or actually to widen old or open new streets this year, but it is important that we know what we want to do. There seems to be no reason to doubt that within a comparatively short space of time, 100,000 people will be living within what are substantially the present limits of Binghamton, and we must make ready for them.

Not less important than consideration of the fact that there is assurance of continued growth, is the thought of the character of that growth. Again, the history of the city's progress is the safest precedent. Binghamton has always been a manufacturing city.

BETTER BINGHAMTON

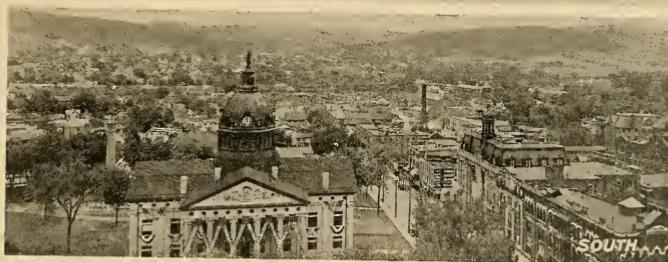
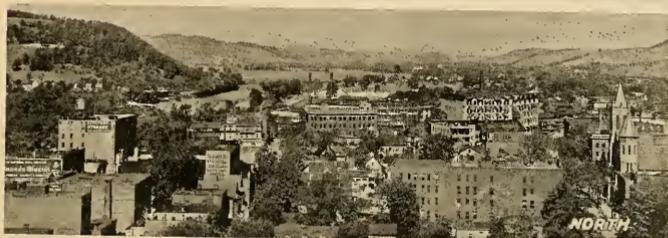
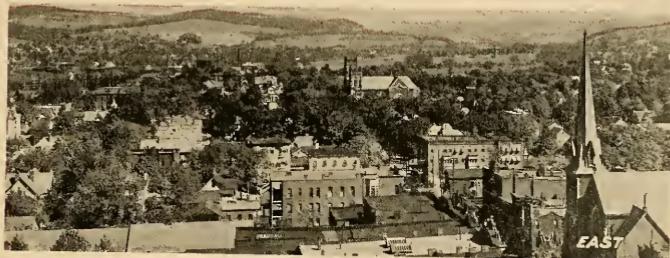
It gained its first importance by the use of the waterpower for mills. Since then, the Eastern half of the nation has been rapidly changing from an agricultural to a manufacturing country. Binghamton is located in the heart of the manufacturing section; its waterpower is not yet developed to the full, it is near the coal fields and it is close to the largest markets and to the greatest export city of the

Diagram showing growth of Population 1810 to 1910—Binghamton



Continent. The manufactories in what may be called the Binghamton district—this including Lestershire and Endicott—are now having the most rapid general growth they have ever had. The city has had its great labor contest, and has rallied from it; it has been through the period when small concerns coalesce or are absorbed by larger. The district is doing now the greatest productive business in its history.

CITY'S PROGRESS, PROMISE AND PRESENT



Proof that no time is to be lost in preparing for Binghamton's growing population is to be found in the rapidity with which the city is already filling its site



BETTER BINGHAMTON

Is there any reason to think that Binghamton will not continue, and become even more markedly, a manufacturing city? The manufacturing cities, it is significant to reflect, are those which show the largest percentage of growth.

Two other reflections are significant: Commerce, as the hand-maid of industry, increases with growth of manufacturing. Thus the larger manufacturing city will have also increased commercial importance. Second, the railroads which serve the Binghamton district are increasing their freight handling facilities and are planning to do this on a yet greater scale. Their officers have made up their minds as to the future of Binghamton. They may be considered expert judges, and the expenditures they authorize are witness of their confidence.

It would seem, then, that in planning for the future of Binghamton, we must plan for not only a larger population but for a larger industrial activity. We have recognized the reality behind the slogan, "A bigger and busier Binghamton." Can we, with these changes, so plan that it shall also be better?

The answer to this question must depend upon social, and even upon economic, conditions. What is the character of the present population; what changes, if any, may be expected to accompany the increase in numbers; how are the people housed, and what about the problem of housing larger numbers; what sort of demands do the leading industries of Binghamton make upon the workers; who are the workers, and what recreational facilities do they need and have?

It appears that the foreign element is not conspicuously large in Binghamton. It has been increasing, however. An Italian colony has gathered south of the railroad freight yards; but the most prominent foreign community is made up of Slavs. They are congregated on the West side, north of the railroads, having largely to themselves the area between the railroads and the Mt. Prospect range of hills. The section swarms with children, so that the colony seems to be growing through a relatively high birthrate as well as through immigration.

The Slavs have good qualities. They are industrious and loyal to their faith; but in their own land they have been largely peasants,



CITY'S PROGRESS, PROMISE AND PRESENT

used to the open air and to simple sanitation, and have had little experience with the rigorous standards which urban life requires. Thus the community must enforce its standards and simplify compliance with them. No segregated colony assimilates rapidly the methods and ideals of a strange people; and while a trip through the Slavic quarter of Binghamton impresses one very well, it is wise to remind ourselves that the experience of other cities, with large Slavic colonies, has been that for the good of the whole community there is need of a constant and friendly interplay between the up-building forces of the community and these Americans—Binghamtonians—in the making.

In Binghamton, the cigar industry, with its large employment of women, is very prominent. According to the census of 1900, the number of women and children employed in Binghamton factories was 5.4 per cent. of the total population, against 3.9 in Elmira, and 1.58 in the United States as a whole. Or putting the matter another way, 40 per cent. of the 5,636 Binghamton wage earners were reported by that census to be women, and about two-thirds of them to be working in the cigar factories. To the ranks of these women workers, the Slavs especially contribute. This is a fact of large civic significance. The probability is that in anticipating a larger population, Binghamton has no reason at present to expect any marked difference, or at all events any conspicuous elevation, in its average character.

With regard to the housing of the people, the census of 1900 reported 5.6 persons per dwelling. This compared with 4.9 in Elmira and 5.3 in Auburn, and is fairly good. As I am informed that there is now no shortage of houses the probability is that substantially the same ratio still holds. The people of Binghamton flatter themselves that there is no tenement problem locally, and there ought not to be any; but the most cursory examination shows its beginnings. Whether with hills and rivers setting a limit to building space, there can be a doubling of the present population without the creation of a serious housing problem is a question which calls for earnest consideration. To forestall a serious problem of this nature is one of the most important duties of a city plan study.



BETTER BINGHAMTON

Finally, the recreational opportunity offered by an industrial city to its wage earners is a matter of great social, and therefore of great civic, significance. I turn to the census statistics again, and find on this point statistics as late as 1908. It appears that that year Pawtucket, R. I., a manufacturing city about the same size as Binghamton, and like Binghamton employing many women, expended 47 cents per capita for recreational facilities; that in the same year Passaic, N. J., a manufacturing town that is smaller than Binghamton, and where therefore the need was perhaps less urgent, was spending 63 cents per capita; but that Binghamton's per capita expenditure for recreative purposes was only four cents. Even Syracuse was spending seven times as much for every man and woman of its larger population. Apparently a more adequate provision of recreational opportunities is another of the needs to be considered in planning for a Better Binghamton; and even for a Binghamton that shall hold its own. To an increasing degree the better class of labor chooses its abode, and chooses the city where it secures the most for a given wage. Undoubtedly also opportunities for wholesome recreation increase the efficiency of labor and its contentment. When the officers of the National Cash Register Co. a few years ago were seeking a city in which to locate anew their plant, one of the first questions asked was regarding the park acreage, its accessibility and the opportunities for recreation.

To beautify the city is a commendable wish; but clearly the city plan must go beyond mere external appearances. It deals with very practical problems, in seeking better to fit the city for its present work and for its larger and busier future. Its questions are those that interest every business man.

II. The Problem

The Problem



HOWEVER pleasant it might be to say to ourselves that the destiny of Binghamton is to be a lovely residential city, built up with the homes of those who recognize and appreciate the beautiful in nature, and that the city planning task is just to fit it for the worthy playing of so gentle a role, the preceding Survey has revealed in fact and history little basis for such belief. And yet I suppose that no lover of towns, standing upon one of the many hills that command the city, could look upon Binghamton in its exquisite setting without yearning to sweep aside all prosaic and grosser claims and plan only for ever growing, ever alluring beauty.

It is clear at least, in the far view over the city, that such a thought may well exert an influence on the plan. The people who live in cities are not working every moment. There are day dreams even there. Pictures are painted and songs are sung. Love is made and lisping children are taught to pray, by the very men and women whose business it is to wrap cigars or make parts of shoes. Though we may not abandon ourselves, in planning for Binghamton, to the highest ideal of civic beauty unalloyed, we do not need to give up entirely the thought of a city beautiful as well as practical. Perhaps it will be the more practical if it is beautiful. It might even be, reverting to the idea of sheer beauty, that Binghamton would serve well itself in doing so good a service to the world as to build up on its lovely hills and rivers a city of beauty.

Yet the manifest destiny of the city as at present constituted is to be, first of all, bigger and busier—not the typical grimy industrial town, there is reason to hope, but that higher type which is at once good to live in and good to do business in. The statement outlines well our problem. We have to plan for a larger population, for a larger business; and to make these plans with due regard to the comforts of life, to physical well being, æsthetics, and to the demands of the higher nature.

The Survey of Binghamton has indicated that the city is divided into particularly well defined districts. It will not be practicable

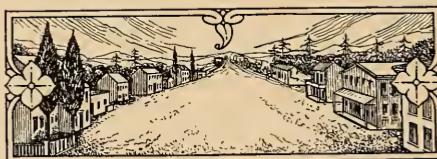


BETTER BINGHAMTON

to take these up one by one, for many of the problems apply impartially to various districts—the river banks for instance. But it will be necessary to keep in mind the distinct character of these districts, for in passing from one of them to another a common problem is likely to take on new aspects.

It has seemed wise, therefore, to group, under the following headings, the discussion of Binghamton's needs and the recommendations designed to meet these needs and fit the city for its future:

1. Elementary Needs.
2. The Street Plan.
3. Parks, Playgrounds and Pleasure Drives.



III. Needs and Recommendations

1. Elementary Needs



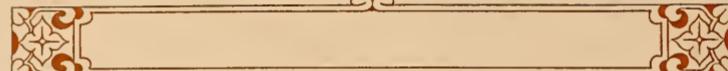
THE term elementary is not very satisfactory in this connection, for it lacks explicitness. It is here used to indicate those primary requirements for which a city that had no ambitions for the future and no thought beyond to-day might well provide, merely for present comfort. These things hardly belong to city planning, for city planning presupposes their provision, as matters of course. If, however, in comprehensive study of a city's needs, it is found that they have not been looked after in adequate measure, there is imposed an obligation to refer at least to them.

The sobriquet "Parlor City," which for many years has been claimed by Binghamton, seems to promise not only a well furnished and well kept city, but one which in these respects is in advance of others of its size. To find it in the fact relatively deficient as regards furnishings is, therefore, the greater shock.

Let us examine first the business section. A city is largely judged by that. Even if this were not true, or were thought not to be important, the business section is the one part of the town to which all the residents themselves resort and in which all have a common interest. The condition of the South Side playground might not greatly interest the resident of Robinson Street; for the Highland Avenue grade crossing the resident of upper Chenango Street may not feel deep concern; but the aspect of the business district and conditions there do matter to everybody in Binghamton—quite apart from the impression which the district may make upon strangers. What, then, do we find as regards elementary needs in this most conspicuous part—indeed, in the very center—of the Parlor City?

We find the streets generally narrow and not all of them paved; overhung by innumerable wires; given a disordered appearance, and still further narrowed in the seeming, by multitudes of projecting signs; no dignified lighting system, no open space where toilers may sit and rest in the noon hour—except in what, in effect and in appearance, is the jail yard! We find "double-deck" bill-

B E T T E R B I N G H A M T O N



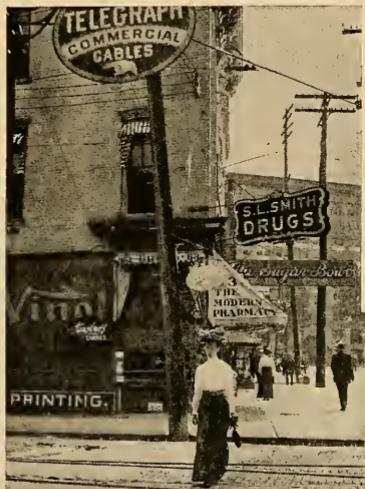
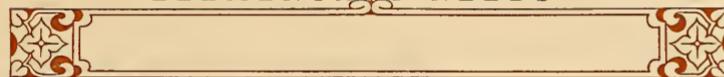
boards, the ugliest type of iron bridges spanning rivers that might be majestic, but that in fact are open sewers, flowing between heaps of ashes and tin cans, not to speak of shacks and signs. This is the parlor of the Parlor City.

Yet there are many good things in the business section of Binghamton which impress one strongly. The effect in reality is not as bad as one might think, in dwelling only on shortcomings. And for the worst of the shortcomings measures of correction are under way. Work is already advanced to prevent the flow of sewage into the rivers; and then will come improvement of their banks; soon the wires will be underground, and there is a project now for more dignified lighting. Pavements are being extended, and meanwhile are kept pretty clean. The Court House square is a pleasant break of green in the heart of the business district, and is something of a civic center. There are some really imposing office buildings, and the commercial lighting at least indicates progressiveness and alertness.

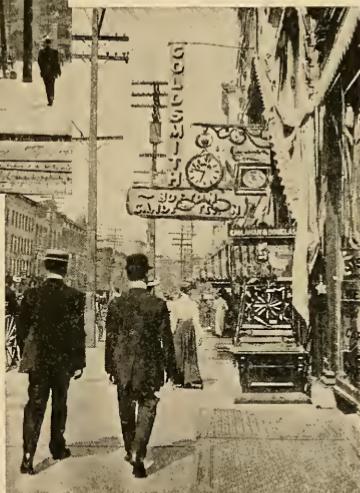
On the whole Binghamton impresses one in its business district, in spite of the shortcomings, as being much alive and on the mend; as a town which has been touched by a new spirit that in a few years will make it all, or more, than one expected. And these are very good impressions to make. Yet no plan for Binghamton can be worked out without reference to the elementary needs. For one thing, the money which will be required to satisfy them is going to decrease by just so much the amount which would otherwise be available for new constructive work. There must be a considerable bond issue, for instance, to pay the cost of freeing the rivers from sewage; but riverbank improvements cannot give adequate returns until that is done. Again, while some streets need widening and some should be extended, a primary need is more paving. That will give greatly increased efficiency to the streets you have.

This matter of paving, which concerns the whole city—the residence districts are more deficient than the business section—is a question which ought to be seriously considered. The wise policy has been adopted of paving the long through streets—or thoroughfares—so that as one goes about the deficiency may not seem as marked as it is. But there is rarely a paved side street, and

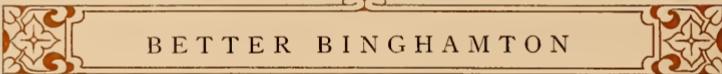
ELEMENTARY NEEDS



How principal business streets are given a disordered appearance and made to look narrower by multitudes of projecting signs



Views east and west from the corner of Court and State Streets



BETTER BINGHAMTON

this means not only vast discomfort to Binghamtonians, but an increased expense for keeping the paved streets clean.

A perfectly fair comparison with other cities reveals the following situation: By the government census of 1907 Binghamton was credited with 331,603 square yards of paved and improved streets, this including macadam area. Of the thirty-one cities of less population which followed after Binghamton, *every one* had more pavement—not relatively only, but more in actual area. Elmira, for example, had three times as much as Binghamton. But even this is not the whole of the showing. Of fifty-four towns of less population than Binghamton—this number carrying the statistics to the smallest community the census bulletin gave—there were only five which had a smaller actual area of improved streets than Binghamton.

It is no excuse to say that there has been some progress since 1907. Other towns have not been standing still. At the close of 1909, the city engineer's report indicated 19 per cent. of the city's street area as paved. But Geneva reported 45 per cent. At the close of 1910 there had been no increase in the proportion at Binghamton. No doubt the agreement with the street railroad company, by which that corporation has paid a very much smaller proportion of paving costs than is required of the street car companies in other cities, is one reason for the backwardness of Binghamton in so primary a need as paving. But that excuse is passing, and there is need now only of the popular realization that if there is any serious wish to make Binghamton deserve the name "Parlor City," any real ambition to carry the town forward and make it the worthy leader of the Southern tier, distancing its rivals in those things which go to make up good city building and business efficiency, there is need of a courageous paving program.

It is interesting in this connection to note, as measuring the city's backwardness in regard to elementary work, that the United States Census Bulletin of 1908 gave the replacement value of Binghamton's public improvements—this phrase including street pavements, gutters, curbing and sidewalks—as only \$640,000. In the cities of Mobile and Augusta, Ga., which happen to be the next lowest in population, and of which, as Southern cities, no high

ELEMENTARY NEEDS

figures would be expected, the like record is, respectively, \$1,058,000 and \$967,293. Cities of less population but of the sort of progressiveness which Binghamton is now showing—cities like Topeka, Springfield, Ill., Wheeling, W. Va.—were credited with having such improvements of a replacement value of much over two millions each. Coming nearer home: In Utica, which is not so very much larger than Binghamton, they totalled \$2,037,690; in Schenectady two and a half millions, and even in little Elmira a third as much again as in Binghamton. It is a pity to have to say so much on this unpleasant subject; but it plainly is a duty.

As for the boast that the city's bonded indebtedness is the lowest in the State, that is no more just a matter for pride, if it is due to the city's going without the things it ought to have, than for a man to take credit to himself for spending less on his children's clothes than any one else, the children being ill clothed.

Not only is the city deficient in the amount of street work which has been done; but of the work accomplished, comparatively little is up-to-date. Owing to the proximity of quarries, the stone curb and flag sidewalk, for instance, have persisted in the residence sections long after they have been substituted in



The old and the new in sidewalk construction
Note also the better effect that would here have been
secured by terracing the walk

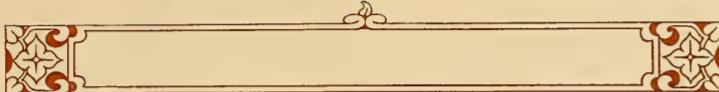
BETTER BINGHAMTON

the corresponding quarters of other towns by the less expensive, neater, and more uniform cement walks and curbs. The latter are beginning to appear in Binghamton, and the combination curb and gutter is not entirely unknown. But in the modern city these are things which one expects as a matter of course, not as an exception. On the other hand, all over Binghamton, one finds stone flag walks, broken and uneven, which give a slipshod aspect to the city; and there is little uniformity about walks and curbs.

In another respect some of Binghamton's street improvements have cost more than they should, through adherence to an old fashioned idea of procedure. When cuts have been necessary to bring streets to grade, the whole cross section has almost uniformly been given the same level, even though the abutting property is thereby put on a terrace so high as to diminish its value. A more sensible plan, in most cases, would be to reduce the cross section cut by allowing sidewalks to be built at a higher level than the



It is disgraceful that a street with such high class private development should be unpaved and have no uniformity of curbing

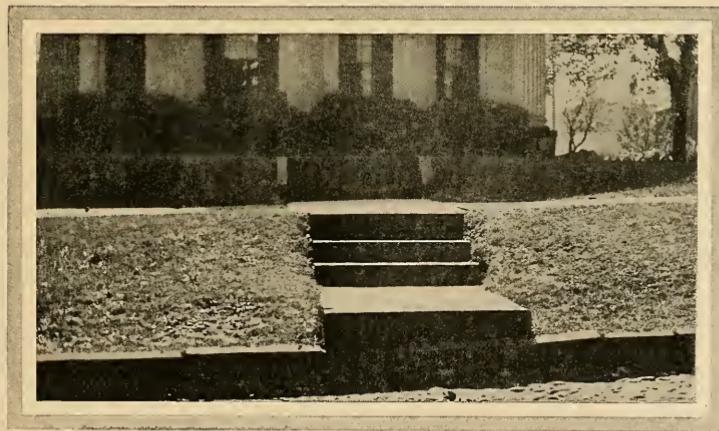


ELEMENTARY NEEDS

roadway. This method reduces cost of construction, and provides a terrace which brings abutting property nearer to the street, while there is no objection to the sidewalk having a somewhat stiffer grade than does the road. There even results a heightening of street picturesqueness.

It must be said, however, that Binghamton residence streets are made attractive by an exceptionally uniform, and altogether charming, absence of front fences. Trees, too, are many and of good size; but they are in want of attention, often of thinning as well as trimming. So greatly do trees contribute to the city's beauty, and also it may be added, to the comfort of life in Binghamton, that one can hardly conceive of too much care being given to them.

The species most prevalent on the streets are the American elm and the sugar, or hard, maple. Both are admirable. In fact, there could be nothing better than the first named, under the conditions given—valley lands, and houses standing back from the street



A terraced sidewalk

in ample grounds. As for the hard maple, Professor Craig has expressed the wish that there might be more generous use of the linden, of which Binghamton now has comparatively few. His thought may be seconded, without, however, condemnation of the maple.

But there are two matters with regard to the street trees of Binghamton to which attention must be earnestly called, in addition

to the need of pruning and thinning, which has been already noted. These are (1) the use of Carolina and other poplars. This is particularly noticeable on the South Side, though the trees may be found all over the city. Their roots so break into water mains and sewers that their use should be prohibited by ordinance. (2) The setting out of what Professor Craig well called "pole-trees"—*i. e.*, young trees with long trunks and bushy tops—which can never become symmetrical. The trees, especially the elms—of which one of the noblest specimens I ever saw is at the water's edge, in the backyard of a Front



Street residence—are so important a factor in the æsthetic assets of Binghamton that the city must safeguard jealously her wealth in this direction. I shall speak of this matter again, further on.

Schoolyards, while better than in some cities, are not as good as in many others, which means that these pieces of public property are not making the contribution they might to Binghamton's beauty.

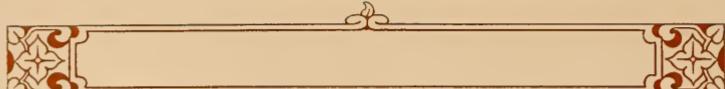


ELEMENTARY NEEDS

As a rule, the city schoolyards are pretty good as lawns; but just as house lawns are beautified by some judicious planting of shrubs, so should these be improved. Shrubs set close around the building, or to emphasize and make beautiful the entrance, would not interfere with play space and would do much, not merely to enhance the attractiveness of neighborhoods, and by their frequency that of the whole city, but to make school seem to children more inviting, and, unconsciously to them, to influence their taste—as do the surroundings of us all—and so to affect many households; and finally, by the force of good example, to lead to the better planting of house lawns. If we may assume, as no doubt we may, the appropriateness of making all public property an example of the civic virtue of regard for appearance, we may justly attach a special obligation to school property since it represents the community's deliberate attempt to educate and cultivate. There are numerous cities, some of them half the size of Binghamton, which have sent hundreds of miles for a competent landscape architect to plan their schoolyards.

A very important matter is the proportions given to residence streets as respects their division into roadway, sidewalk and parking strip. It is now in Binghamton the not unfamiliar division into fifths—each sidewalk space being one-fifth of the total street width and the roadway three-fifths, the sidewalk space carrying a five-foot paved walk on fifty-foot streets and a six-foot paved walk on sixty-foot streets, the rest of the space being put into parking. Expressed concretely, this gives on a fifty-foot street a thirty-foot roadway, a five-foot parking strip on each side and a five-foot paved walk; on a sixty-foot street a thirty-six foot roadway, a six-foot parking strip and a six-foot paved walk.

There would be a gain, financially and aesthetically, in making the space from curb line to property line one-half that of the roadway, and there are very few cases indeed in which this change would not be justified from a traffic standpoint—either present or prospective. Such a change would give a twenty-five foot roadway on fifty-foot streets and would increase the grass margin from five feet to seven and a half. The wider margin is easier to care for, is better for the trees, and of better proportion as regards the street. It can even be beautified if desired with shrubs and flowers. In some cities very



BETTER BINGHAMTON

beautiful streets are created by this means, through the co-operation of residents in the decorative planting of the margins. Finally, the greater distance of curb from property line would give strong reason for the use of a longer radius in the curve of the curb at street corners. It might be somewhat increased even now with pleasing effect, greatly as the present practice improves over the former custom. Of that custom, many examples may still, unfortunately, be seen in Binghamton.

As to the roadway, it should be noted that a twenty-five foot road gives room to turn and allows ample space for three large vehicles abreast—all that there is likely to be need for on most fifty-foot residential streets; and that a thirty-foot road (the present space) is *not enough wider to give room for another vehicle*. In other words, the additional five feet, which under present regulations must eventually be paved and cleaned, is purely waste space as far as its serviceability is concerned.

At this time, when the city should be embarking on an ambitious paving program, this matter of roadway width is of peculiar importance, for if, without loss of efficiency, five feet of paving width can be saved on every longitudinal inch of fifty-foot streets, to say nothing of the proportionate saving made on sixty-foot streets, the result is going to make a deal of difference in the amount of paving the city can do.

It is assumed in the foregoing recommendations that the streets under discussion do not carry car tracks. Of course, when street car tracks are on a street, it must have additional width of roadway. Streets with single tracks should have roadways not less than thirty feet in width; streets with double tracks, roadways not less than forty feet in width, even if the grass margins have to be narrowed to give the space.

Residence streets that are more than sixty feet wide should receive, as they now do not, a special treatment, either by center parking or by emphasis of the side parking. Each such street should be considered a separate and most interesting problem. There are very few streets now in Binghamton which are of particular width, and the few there are, being located without any reference to the general street plan, have a rather pitiful, misplaced and lonesome aspect

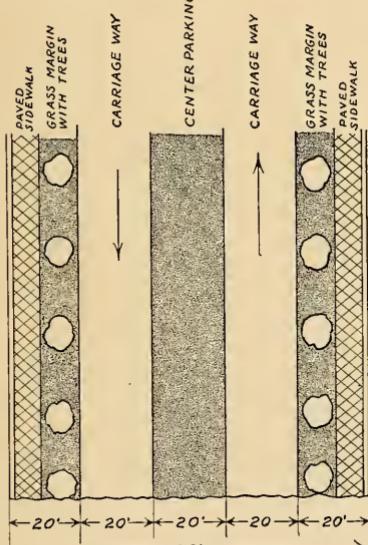
ELEMENTARY NEEDS

to a city planner. There will be opportunity in the next chapter to consider their relation to the street system. Here it is enough to suggest their manner of development.

Grand Boulevard's hundred feet of breadth gives opportunity—the only opportunity in the whole city on a scale of sufficient length to be effective—for that center strip of parking which, in creating an imposing street, contributes so greatly to the beauty, dignity and prosperous aspect of a city. The street is lined now with elms—unfortunately not quite exclusively, as it should be—and we must anticipate that their growing majesty will call for a generous side planting strip. For that reason, when recognizing the aesthetic and economic waste of the present fifty-foot roadway, I hesitated for a time between recommending a widening of the strip between curb and walk or the use of center parking. Finally, the uniqueness of the opportunity in Binghamton for the center parking effect has persuaded me to recommend that Grand Boulevard be developed as follows:

Between curbs and property line, twenty feet; roadways on either side of the center parking, twenty feet; center parking, twenty feet.

This will make a symmetrical and exceedingly handsome thoroughfare; it will diminish by ten feet the width of pavement to be constructed and maintained, while owing to the divided roadways there will be an increase rather than decrease in its traffic efficiency—not a very pressing matter at present, but the only apparent reason for the



**Proposed Development for Grand Boulevard,
Binghamton, N. Y., 1911**

width of roadway now given. As to the degree of traffic efficiency under the proposed arrangement, it may be noted that with the center parking dividing the traffic into eastbound and westbound channels, so that there is no danger of collision, there will be room in each roadway for a line of slow moving and for a line of fast moving vehicles, with now and then an additional vehicle at the curb. This is comparable to the traffic capacity of many of the busiest streets in the world, and is substantially the arrangement adopted on some of the most beautiful and most famous European avenues. It is really, in deference to the assumed preference of the present property owners, a very liberal arrangement as regards traffic provision. The street would look better, and doubtless would serve every need, if the two roadways were narrowed to eighteen feet each, and the center parking thereby widened to twenty-four.

As to the character of the center parking, my suggestion for it is simply long turf beds with concrete curbs. The saving effected in paving cost and care will come very nearly indeed to paying for them—in the case of an expensive pavement would fully pay for them—and with the rise and fall of the street the parking will make a perspective of singular beauty. Though to carry out this suggestion would thus involve little, and, perhaps, no additional cost, it means the difference between a rich and handsome street, justifying the pretentiousness of its name, and one altogether ordinary, and even unpleasant in its waste of space.

In Howard and Burton Avenues, Binghamton has not quite three additional blocks of wide street. The breadth, respectively, of one hundred and forty and one hundred and twenty feet, is so exceptional in Binghamton, and these streets, which intersect each other at right angles at their middle point, are so isolated from the rest of the street system as regards any justification for the sudden expansiveness and ornateness of plan, that it is little wonder that they have been popularly dubbed Howard Park, and turned over to the Park Commissioner. Popular instinct in this case is correct. They may be much more properly developed as park than as street, and I shall therefore reserve consideration of their development until the Park chapter.



ELEMENTARY NEEDS

With reference to the width of Court Street, which varies in the business section, every inch of it is needed for traffic purposes. The problem here is rather to gain space than to use it up in ornament. As I write these words, no definite scheme of ornamental lighting has been adopted; but with the movement to adopt some scheme, and in so doing to free the street of its cluttering poles and wires, this report is of course in heartiest sympathy. Binghamton could not, even with its quite metropolitan sky scrapers, seem more than a country town, as long as the pole and wire evil continued in so aggravated a form in the business district.

With the going of disfiguring poles and wires, the narrow sidewalks of Court Street should be freed from their many cluttering obstructions—showcases, bulletin boards and what not—that now occupy public space for private gain. Where all merchants are treated alike in matters of these kinds, there is no unfair advantage to any one. Court Street, with sidewalk obstructions and projecting signs removed, will receive, both in the seeming and in service, an addition of width which will increase its efficiency and dignity. The sidewalks will accommodate a great many more people; and there is nothing, we should reflect, which could be put on sidewalks which it is so good for merchants to have there, as people. The principal need is only a public opinion that will approve, and demand, enforcement of present ordinances and, if necessary, the enactment of new.

When the business streets are thus improved, and in the residence sections the growing mileage of paved streets—the growth accelerated, we must hope, in the new spirit which Binghamton is to have—has been supplemented by uniformity of curbing (a very great need) and by cement walks, Binghamton will begin to take on that air of prosperity and up-to-dateness which properly belongs to it.

By that time—or before—there must be municipal collection of garbage and ashes. This would not cost much. Probably, as far as the individual citizen is concerned, it would cost less than the present lack of it. Until this is done, and refuse ceases to be scattered all over the place—as it must continue to be until municipal collection and disposal are provided, since, ordinance or no ordinance, people will dump it or leave it in the most convenient spot until it

BETTER BINGHAMTON



is collected for them—there clearly is something more than incongruity in talking of “The Parlor City.”

In closing this chapter, there should be included mention of two or three matters which have direct connection with city planning: I refer to a public market and to the railroad entrance.

I speak of the market, not because I consider it an indispensable adjunct to a well built city, but because it is a usual provision for which there is likely to be a growing demand in Binghamton. My own judgment is that public markets are of decreasing importance—especially as regards retail business. But for wholesale business they are quite desirable; they are frequently conducted with profit to the city, and the demand for one is so legitimate and reasonable, that it seems well to include a consideration of the market’s possible site in a study of Binghamton’s plan.

A market ought to be located in a place that will be convenient to the surrounding farming country, to the homes in all parts of the city and to the business section. The latter requirements suggest a central location, but it ought not to be quite in the business district because of the space it needs and the litter it tends to bring into the streets. Neither should it be in the midst of expensive residence property. There are several sites in Binghamton that answer these requirements, but the best one seems to be the old tan yard—now vacant property—on the corner of Susquehanna and State Streets. This is half a block in area, with the possibility of easy extension. It meets with remarkable efficiency all the conditions named.

There is no place in the city now at which cartmen may wait engagement, and under the ordinance they have to prowl the streets, to the increase of traffic congestion, to say nothing of needless wear and tear and waste of energy. It has occurred to me that the public market on the site proposed would make, after market hours—which close about the time that truckmen’s hours begin—an admirable truck stand. Thus the plat might be in convenient use all day. The facilities provided for the market—as covered sheds, water, etc.—would do double service at no extra cost, and any demand for cartage earlier than the market’s close could be received by telephone at the Market house. The probability, however, is

ELEMENTARY NEEDS

that the community would soon adjust itself to the definite arrangement of hours.

As regards the railroad entrance, the Lackawanna has now an attractive little station which, with the long flower bed in front, and the considerable plaza, makes an entrance much better than one often finds. The Erie and the Delaware and Hudson Railroads, on the other hand, use together a station that is quite as bad as one often finds. But the proximity of its site, and the location of the tracks along side the Lackawanna's, are forcible and tantalizing suggestion of the ease with which there might have been created for Binghamton a union station that would have been creditable to the three railroads and to the city. Until a few months, almost weeks, ago, this seemed still a possibility. The Erie has now, however, been building its new freight house on the very site that could have been so well used for a passenger station—where its relation to the Lackawanna's would have been similar to that of the Boston & Albany road in Springfield to the New York, New Haven & Hartford station, a relation so close and convenient that most travelers suppose the two to be a single union station. In such event, the site of the Erie's present passenger station could have been used for freight. It would seem, at least, that this would have been the most obvious rearrangement, the one promising the maximum convenience to travelers with the minimum cost to the railroads and with the minimum disturbance to those values which a station's location influence.

Since the new freight house of the Erie has doubtless precluded the opportunity for this simple but effective change, there are to be faced the possibilities of a new and separate passenger station for the travelers by the Erie and the D. & H., which would create new conditions that cannot be now foreseen; or the construction of a union station involving so large an expense, and probably the purchase of so much new property, that unfortunately it seems idle to look for the improvement for many years—when various conditions may have changed. The only pertinent question left for the present study, therefore, is whether anything can be done to better the present municipal conditions at the quite attractive entrance of the Lackawanna.

BETTER BINGHAMTON

A very simple change, that would mean much in the way of convenience and orderly adaptation to use, would be the construction, at the top of the steps which lead up from the station level to the street, of an oblong, low, concrete waiting platform, and then the swinging of the street car tracks from the center of the street to the side of this platform. Several car lines make the station their terminal point, and the cars line up in the middle of the street,



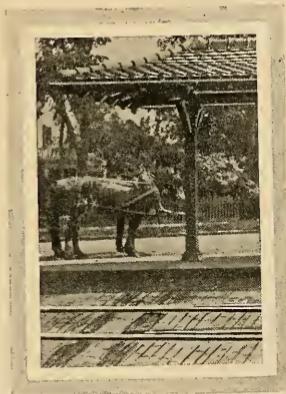
waiting their turn to go. To these cars, across the wet or snowy pavement, passengers, who have already crossed an open space and climbed steps, exposed to the elements, often too burdened with luggage to put up umbrellas, have still to plod.

It would be a very easy, and common sense, procedure to construct this platform, swing the tracks over to it, and cover it, in part at least, with a light but ornamental roof which would protect from wind and sun. This roof might well be extended over the steps and to the station. It is quite possible that the Binghamton Railroad Co. would be willing to pay the cost of track change and platform,

ELEMENTARY NEEDS

if given permission to make the improvement; and that the Lackawanna would consider the cost of the roof's extension over the footway to the station a small expense entirely justified by the added comfort of passengers. Even the old station of the Erie does as well as that for travelers. So it may be that this improvement can be made without any municipal expense.

The removal of the poles and wires is too plain a need at this point to call for exposition. Single ground-glass globes on metal or concrete poles about ten feet high might well stand at either end of the proposed platform, and an ornamental electrolier, with a cluster of lights, at the west end of the grass plat. Binghamton would then present to travelers a very dignified, orderly and attractive entrance, insuring the favorableness of that first impression which is so lasting.



Part of a shelter for trolley passengers
in Brookline, Mass.



2. The Street Plan



THE street plan of Binghamton presents to the city planner a tangle of unusual interest and intricacy. Here is a city which, at maximum points of extension, is five miles long and three miles wide, and which has not a single direct thoroughfare across its width, and only one highway that goes from end to end of its longer diameter. The latter highway is not direct, its general course describing a long curve; it suffers a sharp break at a critical point; and it has not even a continuous name. Further, of the city's seven river bridges, only two—the Court and Washington—make direct connections at both ends.

The peculiar conditions which are thus noted are, in exaggerated form, typical, for the Binghamton city plan is made up, to unusual extent, of short ends of street. Streets of much promise in direction terminate abruptly, with no direct outlet. There is no strong framework of through main highways, knitting all parts of the city together. The plan is a collection of small independent units, corresponding to tracts that have had individual, or, at least, separate ownership, and that have been planned with little consideration for one another. There has been no comprehensive control or conception.

The condition has both its drawbacks and advantages. The former are obvious. The advantages include exemption from a deadening monotony of plan, the creation of many attractive street vistas, the provision of convenient short cuts for journeys of little length, and the creation of building plats of irregular shape and size. Binghamton would be a much less interesting and less attractive city than it is if all the streets had been laid out, regardless of natural features of the site, with that regularity which characterizes Philadelphia, Chicago, and portions of New York, and which has spoiled so many small Western cities. A good city plan does not mean monotony.



THE STREET PLAN

For example of the architectural vistas opened by streets that end abruptly, note the exquisitely beautiful view of Christ Church on Washington Street, as one looks down Henry. Such contributions to the picturesqueness of the city are recompense for many delays to traffic. In Binghamton the opportunities have not been availed of with the frequency one could wish, or might expect. Other churches have been satisfied with conventional street-side sites; and of the more important public buildings the Court House alone has been placed where it closes the vista of a street. Strangely enough, even that view, which would make a very fine accent at the end of Chenango Street, has been permitted to suffer obliteration by the trees. But the opportunities persist, and as the city is built more closely and attractive houses multiply, we may expect them to be placed on sites that at once lend emphasis to the structure and open from its windows so charming and unusual a view as the vista of a street.

It is, then, in no spirit of the iconoclast who, careless of conditions past and present, would reduce everything to conventional rule and have every street "go through"; in no spirit of the old maid, who would untangle all the snarls and put everything straight and prim, that we should take up the study of so irregular and interesting a street system as Binghamton's. Rather, considering the cost of changing streets, we should do as little as we can, with fairness to needs of existing traffic and to the future needs of the foreseen larger city. We may lay to heart the wise words of Professor Mawson, of England, who, in his great new work on "Civic Art" says, speaking generally of city planning: "Five-sixths of the town is already planned for us, and our skill will be best shown by the manner in which we weave the new and the old into one harmonious composition."

It appeared in the preliminary study of Binghamton that the historical business center was determined by topographical conditions, which also set definite bounds to it. Ample of area for all present needs, as the section is, the fact that it is completely girdled by rivers and railroads—bounds which business always finds it difficult to cross—imposes an obligation to plan for the time when business will fill up the section and when growing congestion will

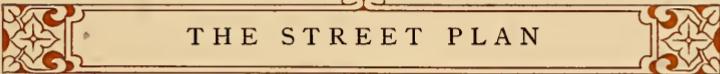


BETTER BINGHAMTON

require such facilitation of traffic as a well articulated street plan alone can give. For the circumscribed business section, therefore, we must be more exacting of street requirements than for any other part of the city.

The most immediate and pressing need is with reference to Chenango Street. Not only is this a long thoroughfare, reaching from the very Court House Square to the most northern limits of Binghamton, and thence to the towns beyond; but, owing to its oblique direction, it offers the shortest possible route from any portion of the business section to the railroad stations. This is a remarkable condition. It means that the already crowded thoroughfare is bound to have poured upon it a steadily growing volume of travel and of the kind of travel which is most inconvenienced by delays. In the extended and growing North Side, every street is tributary to the main stream, Chenango Street; and from the South Side, the East Side and the West, save for that small portion of the latter to which the Ferry Street bridge is nearest, all persons and vehicles going to or from the stations make use of Chenango. And the street seems narrow for its business even now!

The development of Chenango Street into a business highway of prime importance could be thus foreseen, even were the transformation not already in progress. Originally a residence street, with houses set back from the street line, we now find the construction moving forward to the edge of the walk as one building after another is erected on what had been garden space. There could be no surer indication than this of the street's changing character, or any more definite warning that if the street is ever to be widened the work should be done at once, before it becomes necessary to tear down buildings and award heavy damages. Already it is too late to widen it on the west side without great cost. But on the east side of the street, though there are a number of business buildings, only one, curiously enough, is out to the present street line, from the Gas Company office, a half block from Court Street, all the way to the viaduct. The exception is the structure at the corner of Warren Street. Save for that, a four foot widening of the street can now be provided for simply by establishing a building line that distance back from the present street line on the street's east side



THE STREET PLAN

and decreeing that henceforth no building shall be so erected, or altered, as to prevent the addition on that side of four feet to the street's width.

It is probable that some damages would have to be allowed, but they should be slight on unbuilt upon land after deducting the benefit of the widened street, and by simply adopting the line in a theoretical way, and imposing no restriction until a building permit is requested, it may be that their payment could be spread over a considerable period. Certainly, the chance is a rare one for securing a most necessary addition to street width at little cost.

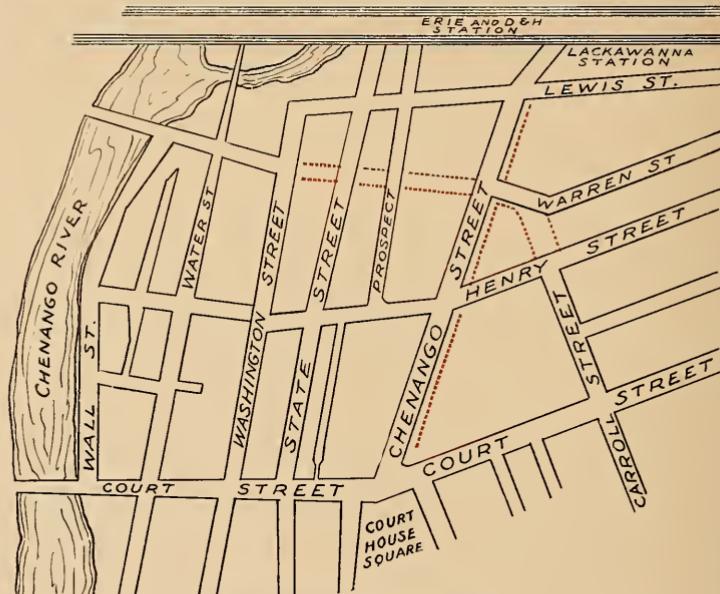
The addition may seem small; but when Chenango Street is crowded, four feet will make a considerable difference, and if it is not secured now the chance for it is lost except at enormous cost. The street from Court to Lewis is now sixty-six feet wide. Widened to seventy, there would be space for two twelve-foot sidewalks, and a forty-six foot roadway. That roadway would give room on both sides for a vehicle to stand at the curb and for a slow moving one to pass it, while leaving eighteen feet in the center for the double car track and for the passage of vehicles that move quickly. That is pretty good provision.

North of the viaduct, the street narrows; being only sixty feet to Pearne and then only fifty to State. Beyond that point it becomes sixty-six again, to the Binghamton line. While opportunity offers, the street should therefore be widened, at least to sixty-six feet, from the viaduct to State Street. The most congested portion will be always south of the railroad station; but for a main thoroughfare, carrying double car tracks and serving as the one trunk highway to a large and populous territory, fifty feet, and even sixty feet, is too narrow.

There is one other way in which relief can be given to the expected over-burdening of Chenango Street, not instead of the widening, but as supplementary to that action. This would be by extending Carroll Street the short distance from Henry to Warren. By doing this, Carroll Street would be made a shorter and more direct station approach than Chenango for a large portion of the South and West Sides. It would consequently catch much of that travel, and would be in line for business development when the

BETTER BINGHAMTON

business district, already touching it at Court Street, spreads. The increase of speculative values that would probably follow this small extension—the depth of a single lot—would much more than pay, in the rise of assessment values, the slight cost of making it, and we should gain, at no net outlay, convenience for a large section of Binghamton, relief for Chenango Street, and forehanded provision for the future. It would be, indeed, the part of wisdom to take for Carroll Street, thus extended, the widening action proposed for Chenango, except that on Carroll the street could be widened on both sides now, and plans made for the finest and broadest business street of Binghamton—all, practically, for nothing.



Proposed street changes in business center

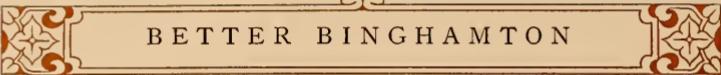


THE STREET PLAN

Another street change of value would be the eastward extension of Ferry Street. The Ferry Street Bridge, one of only two bridges connecting the big West Side with the center of Binghamton, leads at each end to a *cul de sac*. At the east end this can be quite easily remedied. The street, if carried through to Chenango opposite Warren, would usefully cut three very long blocks, and would connect directly with extended Carroll Street. Thus it would provide a short cut off, emphasizing still more the business value of Carroll Street and doing much to bring order out of a street arrangement that can only become, until rectified, an increasing burden to traffic. If, as appears, this direct connection would cut through a large building that might be considered to make the cost prohibitive—a question of some doubt—the line could be so swerved as to avoid the building and yet make a fairly good connection. But at worst the cost would be small for the benefit gained, the total distance being only 750 feet, or less than any one of the blocks it cuts.

A third street change in the business district should be made in the case of Isbell Street. Here, with business almost at the edge of it now, is a street that is apparently only about twenty feet wide and which, withal, has a kink and a jog in it, though only a block and a half in length. But the frame houses that line it are all set back from the street, and there is only the need of pointing out: (1) That if this street persists in its present form after business has surrounded it, it must be either as a fearful handicap to business or as a moral sewer; (2) that after business has surrounded the street, it may be too late to secure its widening; and (3) that forming a direct connection between the Court House Square and a possible riverside improvement, this street has possibilities more desirable to the city than a moral sewer. To-day it is easy both to widen and straighten Isbell Street.

Binghamton is fortunate in having a clearly defined business district, its boundaries so well marked that there can be no thought of its moving elsewhere or doing anything but filling up the section, as the growth of the city demands more business space. The good fortune imposes, however, the obligation to make ready for the future.



BETTER BINGHAMTON

Of the river boundaries of the business section, I need not here speak. Nor need even the railroad boundary long detain us. From the standpoint of municipal development, the freight transfer yards are so unfortunately placed, and from the railroads' and shippers' standpoint are so cramped, that it was inevitable that measures should be taken to secure their relocation where space was not as valuable. Unfortunately, experience with railroads gives no reason for hoping that the present yards will be available for streets and buildings; but the city should do what it can to hasten the construction and increase the usefulness of the contemplated eastern and northern yards. Not only positive measures, meeting reasonable requests half way; but negative ones, such as restrictive ordinances concerning the noise, smoke, and the protection of grade crossings within city limits, will accelerate the improvement.

Bounded on three sides by rivers, beyond which lies the bulk of the city's population, the location of bridges is a matter that strongly affects the business section. There is demand now for a new bridge which will facilitate intercourse between the South Side and that portion of the West Side which is south of Main Street; also between the latter and that part of the future business area which is south of Court Street. The fact that the Cathedral is on the West Side south of Main has given vigor to this demand, though it must soon have arisen in any case.

The only single structure that can meet the two fold need is a bridge spanning the Chenango, just above its confluence with the Susquehanna. The ideal traffic location would have been one directly connecting Susquehanna Street with Le Roy. At the time of my first visit to Binghamton the necessary land on the West Side was vacant. Since then there has been commenced the erection of a house so costly as effectually to block the project.

It may be assumed that the city will ascertain at just what point the bridge can be now most economically constructed and the necessary property most cheaply acquired. After the recent experience, business sense suggests that this action be taken promptly and the approaches condemned, even though actual construction of the bridge be postponed for some time. From appearances, the most advantageous place would seem to be a point about midway between LeRoy



THE STREET PLAN

Street and Riverside Drive, where the river is a little narrower and the houses less expensive. But the one matter of concern to this discussion is that a bridge across the Chenango, from the city planning point of view, appears more important than one across the Susquehanna. A reason for this is the anticipated business development south of Court Street, as well as north of it, and the circumstance that a bridge which brought into lower Water and Washington Streets a considerable tide of high class travel from the West Side would bring a higher grade of business into those streets and so give to them a better character. In so doing, it would extend the area, now quite circumscribed, that is available for first-class retail stores.

But the business of a town is not all commercial. In a manufacturing city, at least, the industrial districts, in which the money is made, are of quite as much civic importance as is the commercial, in which it is spent.

There ought to be more than one industrial section. In an ideal development of a city there would be a number of such districts limited in area, all having railroad facilities, and all so located as to do the least possible injury to costly residence property, by means of smoke, odor, noise, and heavy trucking. Two such factory districts are now developing within the corporate limits of Binghamton, and there are of course a number of factories near the center of the city while other large plants are located beyond its western line. Of the districts I especially refer to, one is between the railroads and Main Street, east of Glenwood Avenue. The other is north of Robinson Street, along the D. & H. and the Lackawanna's Syracuse branch. Both are capable of growth and they are so admirably located, not only as respects the factors already named, but as regards the very important one of proximity to inexpensive home sections, that their growth is to be encouraged.

From the street planning point of view, the section north of Main Street and east of Glenwood Avenue needs the transformation of Industrial Avenue into something more worthy of its name, and worthy of the importance to Binghamton of the travel that uses it. The street should be extended through to Glenwood at easy grade, should be well drained, and given a good strong pavement—such



BETTER BINGHAMTON

as stone block, quiet not being necessary here. There is need also of better—that is to say, in particular, of safer—communication with the inexpensive residence district north of the tracks. As this will naturally house the greater number of the employees, it is most advisable to promote its accessibility. We may observe, however, that the intercourse will be almost wholly by foot and that south of the tracks the limited space is more valuable for factory sites than for streets. I suggest, therefore, that a footbridge over the tracks, as an extension of Rogers Street, would probably best serve the affected sections. This would cost so little, and large shippers so easily gain access to the ears of railroad officials, that it is probable that there would be no difficulty in obtaining the consent of the latter corporations to bear their share of the construction costs.

With regard to the section along the railroads between Robinson and Bevier Streets, it seems to me that this has great possibilities. From a civic standpoint, its location as an industrial site is almost ideal; and as much cheap land can be here reclaimed and made valuable, and as there is ample housing space, I think that everything possible should be done—if it is desired to make Binghamton a manufacturing city—to fit that section for industrial purposes.

West of the tracks is a large area, wet and vacant. By carrying the creek directly into the Chenango near the city line, where it comes within a thousand feet of the river, it should be easy to drain this region and make it available for factory sites. Then State Street, leading pretty directly, for all its twistings, and at even grade, from this section to the business district, should be developed as a heavy traffic street. The tract should be cut into large plats, suitable for manufacturing; while in the unplatted region to the east narrow and inexpensive streets, so close as to make shallow lots—lots of, say, eighty-feet depth, with occasional play areas reserved in the interior of the blocks—should be laid out. Other streets should wind attractively, at easy grade, up the hill sides. In all this work, Binghamton has opportunity for some scientific town planning that should bear rich fruit. By co-operation among the land owners and the exercise of municipal control, conditions should be created here that would make Binghamton so attractive to industry that Endicott's lure would fail.

THE STREET PLAN

There remains the need for a good factory section near the center of the city. My judgment is that Noyes Island should have that kind of development. I know some persons will be disappointed at the conclusion, but we have to recognize that to live a city must do business, that some of its manufacturing must be close in town, and that Binghamton has no lack of centrally located park sites that are of equal promise aesthetically and more pleasantly accessible.



There is no other area of such extent, centrally located, to which railroad facilities can be given with the same ease. The tract contributes nothing now to the beauty of its neighborhood, so that no values would be destroyed in dedicating it to manufacture. Even as regards the one block of Prospect Avenue, and where indeed houses are on only one side of the street, the photograph shows how the wild growth already to be found on portions of the street's other side could be made to conceal the low situated factories and their chimneys. And in any case the latter would not be nearly as imminent as are the car barns. The island site, with all its convenience

for industry and central location, is so isolated as not to interfere with commercial development; and while the point has been made that the location here of a park would make a good impression upon travelers seeing it from the trains, this is by no means a conclusive argument. There are many travelers who would be as much impressed by the view of an up-to-date industrial section as by that of a park.

Leaving now the comparatively restricted business and industrial areas, we have to consider those aspects of the street system which more intimately concern the larger residence sections. The great need here is the creation of through highways. On the West Side, only Front, Clinton and Main are such thoroughfares, and of these Front Street is practically a marginal avenue, having almost no travel which goes all the way through, for it runs at right angles to the main traffic stream. The South Side is fairly well provided for, with Conklin, Vestal, Pennsylvania and Park Avenues and DeRussey Street. So also is the North Side, with State and Chenango Streets, though a good change here would be the extension of Liberty Street to State. If there is to be the suggested industrial development at the north end, with consequent influx of population, the need for this correction of street plan will be urgently felt. The East Side has Court Street, Robinson Street, and several long north and south streets.

It appears, then, that the greatest need for the provision of some through thoroughfares is on the large and populous West Side; and it is just where, owing to high property values, any attempt to create them will be most expensive. Only essential and simple changes, therefore, can be undertaken. From Front Street, Main Street slowly turns until its direction is northwest. This leaves the westward spreading city with no direct approach to the business district. The result of the handicap is seen in the stretches of vacant property and in the fact that, while to the northwest the city is built up far beyond the city line (which is itself two miles from the Court House) to the direct west, there is little beyond Laurel Avenue —one mile from the Court House.

An early and easily accomplished improvement would be the westward extension of LeRoy Street, and subsequently of the streets



THE STREET PLAN

on either side of it, to meet Riverside Drive. This would open a large and important territory. Seminary Avenue especially should be extended westward at once.

Nearly a half mile north of the extended line of LeRoy Street is Highland Avenue, which goes west to the city line. But its important eastern end is a *cul de sac* at Beethoven Street, and persons bound for the stores and offices in the city now have to go out of their way four blocks to reach a street that will take them directly into the business district. Had Highland Avenue been extended directly eastward very little more than that, it would have intercepted Main Street about a half mile nearer the city than its travelers can now reach that thoroughfare. This would have made an immense difference in the development of the section which Highland Avenue taps. As one link of the extension already exists, in Gary Street, and as three other blocks are included in the vacant Bennett tract, through which—even were it transformed into a park—the street could be very delightfully extended to Laurel Avenue, it is not perhaps too much to suggest that the whole extension be made. The cost of the two last blocks of it, from Clarke to Main, would, of course, be large; but over against this cost is to be placed the resulting increase of assessable values in all the large district which Highland Avenue serves. Expressed in figures, the extension would provide a cut off of 2200 feet in lieu of the present roundabout course of 4000 feet. The new High School as well as the business district would be brought that much nearer to the homes to which Highland Avenue would furnish an arterial approach; crowded Main Street would be relieved of some of its traffic, and there would be opened a new and far pleasanter approach to the western part of the city.

A third important street extension project on the West Side should make its purpose the tying of isolated Grand Boulevard into the street system. Fortunately, it is not difficult to do this. Ending abruptly now at Schiller Street, the Boulevard is prevented by a small jog from direct connection with Haendel Street. As the southwest corner of Grand Boulevard and Schiller Street and the opposite corner of Haendel Street are vacant, nothing serious prevents the elimination of the jog by a graceful curve. Then Haendel can be



BETTER BINGHAMTON

easily widened to Beethoven, thus carrying Grand Boulevard's broad sweep forward. Beyond Beethoven is the little triangle which, I understand, the city already owns. The use of this extends the improvement to Mendelssohn Street. Haendel proceeds a short block further, to Laurel Avenue. Then as an extension of it, though with a slight jog (which would come out when the two streets were widened), is Catherine Street. This brings Grand Boulevard to Clarke Street, whence one block of new street would carry it to Main.

A beauty of this plan is that it provides a short connection of Highland Avenue with Main Street. Should Highland Avenue's direct extension be thought too expensive, this would be of enormous value. Highland Avenue, carried one block through the vacant Bennett tract, strikes Haydn Street, which carries it immediately into the proposed Grand Boulevard extension. Thus the short new street westward from the corner of Main and Cedar Streets would be an outlet for both Highland Avenue and Grand Boulevard, for the former even more directly than for the latter, and incidentally it would be an outlet for all the streets they serve. For its length, it would be one of the most important streets in Binghamton.

At its west end, Grand Boulevard can be, and should be, prolonged the short interval to Grand Avenue.

The frequency of jogs or breaks in the Binghamton street system has been referred to in the preceding pages. Indeed, it has more than once appeared in considering a short prolongation of even two streets, and is a matter that must be touched upon in discussing the street plan. Roughly speaking, all instances of irregular street connection may be divided into two classes: Those which mean a breaking of through lines of travel, such as the instances we have already considered, and those which are only rather picturesque irregularities in strictly minor streets. Of the latter, Frederick Street, on the North Side, is an example.

It is clear that in the street platting a couple of hard right angles were used where the traffic itself took easy and graceful curves, and that thereby good garden space was sacrificed and an ugly effect substituted for one that might be beautiful. Thus Frederick Street serves as an admirable type of a large class of improvements in

THE STREET PLAN

street arrangement, where the awkwardness of existing jogs, and their danger and delay to traffic, could easily be transformed into positive beauty of alignment with an elimination of all danger and delay. Among small residence streets of no traffic significance, some little irregularity of street connection, such as Frederick Street's, is not a bad thing, if it be managed carefully. It provides house sites with pleasant views down the street; it makes possible an archi-



tectural accent to give charm to the vista of the street; and it tends to promote that quiet which many persons desire in a residence street, by diverting through travel to less broken thoroughfares.

It is not necessary to attempt to name every irregular street connection of Binghamton which might be thus improved by substituting a curved connection for two right angles. Often there will be need of willingness to give and take on the part of the residents, in that co-operation from which alone true civic progress can result. Each case, too, will need separate planning; but these plans are not difficult to make. Let those who live near any such irregular con-



BETTER BINGHAMTON

nnection examine the obvious possibilities of their own corner, and then test the readiness of neighbors to promote the improvement. If that be present, the city engineer can make a satisfactory plan. By such measures as this more can be done to improve the aspect of a city, and to correct the kinks of its street system, than would be realized. After all, a city planner can only suggest; it is for the people themselves, in the main, to do.

There is a final word to be said with reference to the street plan. This is with regard to street car routes. Trolley lines take the streets, and if there be not direct streets there will not be that direct, quick and cheap transportation which is so essential for the upbuilding of cities and the prevention of housing congestion. I do not know that I can put the matter in a more practical way, or more authoritatively, than by quoting from the report of the committee of the New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment appointed to solve the subway problem. The report quoted is that which was accepted as the correct solution. It recites the following as fundamental conclusions:

That future rapid transit lines should follow as closely as possible the development of a logical and well-ordered city plan.

That the city should provide, as rapidly as the means at its command permit, not only for relief of congested areas, but for the opening of lines through those sections that, though relatively undeveloped, offer promising opportunity for the better distribution of population.

That the location of particular routes should be determined by the city, for the city's reasons, and not necessarily to conform to plans proposed by operating companies.

It is for this reason that the extension of LeRoy Street is particularly desirable, and that an eastward extension of Highland Avenue direct to Main is to be urged, even though that avenue be given a pretty convenient connection through the Grand Boulevard extension. Grand Boulevard should be reserved for driving only. In our plans for its development no provision has been made for trolley tracks, and with the cars on Main Street, paralleling the Boulevard's whole course at a distance of only a block, it has no need for car tracks. It should be a show avenue of the city and reserved for light driving. To put tracks on the first three blocks of its extension



THE STREET PLAN

would be, therefore, to hinder greatly the realization of its particular function in the city plan. On the other hand, Highland Avenue, penetrating a beautiful home section which has no street car facilities, does need them, and unless the cars are given a direct means of reaching Main Street, the pressure to put them upon the extended portion of Grand Boulevard may prove irresistible. In making street plans, it is necessary to take not the broad view only, but the long view ahead.

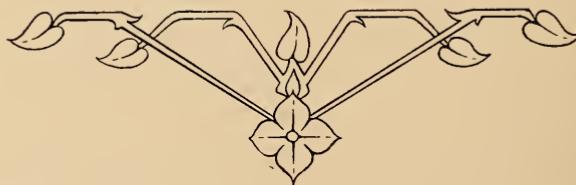
This can never be secured if the matter is left so largely as now to individual tract owners. Plans of proposed subdivisions should be submitted before execution to a competent official authority—as your present city engineer; and his authority should be reinforced by some new ordinances. One of these would name a maximum gradient, forbidding him to recommend the acceptance of any street having a greater grade, or the council to accept it. This is a most urgent need in a city surrounded by hills, which the streets are already beginning to climb. Another ordinance should rescind the present minimum width—which may be absurdly unreasonable under certain conditions—and allow the acceptance of much narrower streets, that are not arterial, provided a building frontage line be established which will insure such space between the structures on either side as will secure light, air, and the proper amenities, and give opportunity for subsequent inexpensive widening should the necessity arise. This is a large subject, second to no other in its importance to the community. For full discussion of it, I must refer to my new book—wholly devoted to this subject—“The Width and Arrangement of Streets.”

In recognizing that the further growth of Binghamton must mean almost directly the extension of its streets to the encompassing hills, and in warning against permitting excessive grades, it should be stated perhaps that cuts are also to be avoided. The streets should undoubtedly climb the hills, so opening to occupancy delightful viewpoints and most healthful situations; but they should do their climbing by easy grades. As directness is not a matter of importance on streets that are of little traffic or arterial value, they can wind very deliberately on the hillsides, with steeper footpaths offering short cuts to pedestrians. And in all this

BETTER BINGHAMTON

winding of the streets, the curve, not the angle, must be made use of. In America we are just beginning to appreciate the delightfulness of a curving street—especially for residence; and there is not a city where it could be used with a pleasanter effectiveness, or withal more fittingly, than in Binghamton, on the girdle of softly moulded hills.

The hills offer, also, one other great advantage from the street planning point of view. This is conspicuousness of site for important buildings. Official, educational, charitable and other institutions, if placed on plateaus, or on hill sides, gain for themselves an air of splendor and impart a distinction to a town or city that must be lost to it if they are given commonplace sites. The effectiveness of the State Hospital location in Binghamton is illustrative of this point.



3. Parks, Playgrounds and Pleasure Drives



In studying the improvement possibilities of Binghamton, there is reached in a chapter on Parks, Playgrounds and Pleasure Drives that aspect of the subject which appeals to most people. This is always the case, but it must be particularly so where a town has such exquisite setting, so that beauty lies all around one, and to lift the eye is to see the gentle hills in their ever changing lights. Even through the street pattern of the city the two rivers draw broad threads of beauty; the insistent hills close street vistas; ravines, full of romance and mystery, venture to the very city limits, and any slight exertion to reach a higher level is repaid by the spreading out of a panorama of surprising loveliness. It is inevitable that one should think of parks where beauty is so cheap; it seems impossible that any drive, suitably constructed, should not give pleasure. It is inconceivable that a city so located should not have aspirations, forever inspired anew, whatever its own shortcomings.



Court House Square

BETTER BINGHAMTON

But this must be a practical discussion. Let us consider first the parks which the city has, and then take up the question of supplementing them, if there be need of so doing. At the very heart of the city is the Court House Square—beautiful with its rich turf and great trees, in spite of fundamental weaknesses of design. It is of incalculable value. Imagine the commonplaceness of the business section of Binghamton without that focus, and measuring the value of the plat by the cost of the adjacent land estimate its monetary value, the impossibility of duplicating this possession and the extent of the investment it now represents. Care should be taken to secure an adequate return.

Assuming all the structures in the park to be permanent fixtures, let there be resolve, first, that there be no additions to their number. Second, that the social service of the park—the service for which its location particularly fits it—be extended, by increasing the number of benches, allowing them to be placed in the front and side yards beside the walks and under the great trees. Some of these benches should be reserved for women and children. Third, the jail—it is



Park benches assembled under grated windows

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

needless to speak now of the place of honor which the citizens have given to it—should be as much concealed as possible. The whole situation at present, park benches assembled under grated windows, is grotesque in the extreme as one looks at those outside, and correspondingly pitiful as one thinks of those within. I suggest that the real jail yard be definitely screened off, by planting a hedge of poplars, with lower growing evergreens to hide the spaces between the trunks, parallel to the jail's east wall. This will set off the space where the park seats now are. Fourth, the necessity of correcting the present arrangement having compelled a beginning of this work, there is reason for carrying it further by "planting out" the exceedingly conspicuous public comfort station. Just why this was put underground instead of above, is not clear, for certainly there is not the slightest privacy or concealment about it now. As a surface structure, it might have been made more presentable, and it would not have occupied more space nor have intruded more plainly upon the park. But the cost of semi-underground construction having been borne, the undoubted advantage which that gives, in the



Conspicuous public comfort stations

BETTER BINGHAMTON

possibility of hiding it in a pleasant clump of shrubbery, ought certainly to be availed of. On the street front, where there is not room for informal shrubbery, there is space for a hedge. Fifth, having been obliged thus to detach somewhat the southeast corner of the square, an effect markedly increased by the lower level of those grounds, so that they appear quite separate even without the border plantations, I suggest that the timid walk which now slinks to the back door of the Court House be made firm and strong, straightened, broadened, and carried through to Collier Street. The City Hall's Frenchy façade is directly on its axis; the walk can be made a main approach—it would have no little convenience; and from it will be opened the best view of the City Hall. Of course the jail is uncomfortably near; but it is near everything, and as park benches are now located to allow people to sit and look at it, the suggestion that it would be seen with the tail of the eye as one gazed at the City Hall seems hypercritical.

The City Hall is the building which officially stands for Binghamton, and the county being so well represented it does not seem too much to attempt in this way to add a little dignity to the city's building.

Binghamton has little else in the way of small city parks. The triangle at Schubert, Haydn and Mendelssohn Streets is featureless and nearly flat. The young maples planted irregularly around its



Timid walk back of Court House

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

edge will some day make a pleasant play of shadow on a well clipped lawn. A large mounded bed of bright flowers, in the center of the plat, or eventually a monument to one of the great musicians whom the surrounding streets commemorate, or sculpture that represents the spirit of music itself, will be the proper development to give to it. Meanwhile, with well kept turf and neat curbs, the city can set an example and get a pretty little park space at small cost.

Howard Park, so-called, is a forty-foot planting strip with a roadway on each side of it. It is thickly crowded with trees, which need thinning out so that order may be given to them, and then some shrubbery should be put in to define the lines still further. Only an orderly, regular and formal effect can be satisfactory here.

There are a couple of vacant lots to which children are admitted, and far over on the South Side is the Kent Playground, a sloping city square for which the development plans have not yet been fully carried out. Also on the South Side, work has commenced for the reclaiming of a strip of riverbank by filling in the bed of the old canal. This is a good thing to do, though the outlook from the site



Present outlook from the new South Side Park



BETTER BINGHAMTON

of the proposed park is not such as to promise much attractiveness for it if the work stops there.

These little spaces, of which only two are now enough developed to permit of any use, are a very slender equipment of small parks and playgrounds for a city of 50,000 people. When it is added that the two large parks of the city are at the city line, so that most visitors must ride to reach them, and it is recalled that of the parks mentioned only one has possibility of active social service—and that for children alone—save as the ministry of beauty serves, it is clear that in this busy manufacturing town, where some day a large population is likely to crowd a limited area, the park need is not wholly, nor most vitally, aesthetic.

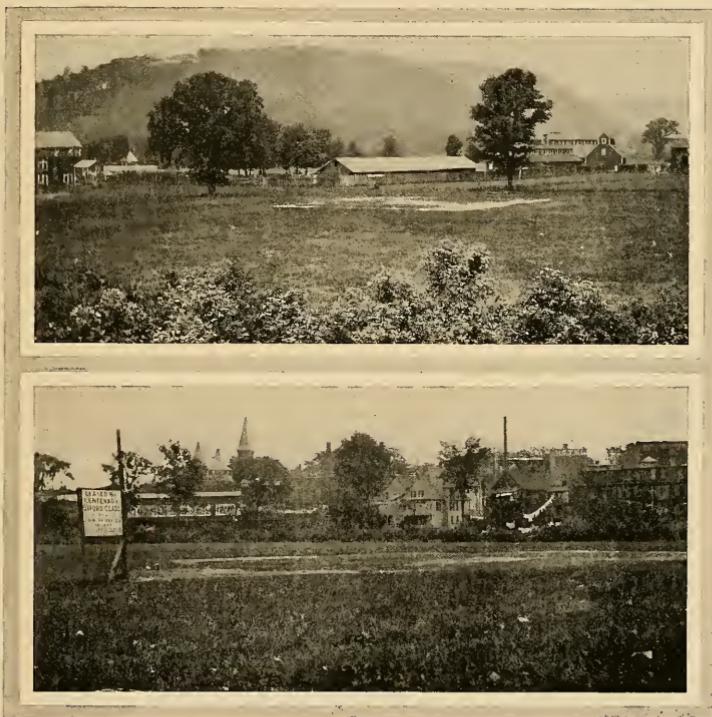
There is need for a conveniently located athletic field, where factory employees can get wholesome exercise in the open air. In this time of monotonous piece-work, deadening to brain and to all but a single set of muscles, this is a more urgent necessity than ever before in the history of the world. There is need of the corresponding provision for women employees, only their requirement is not so much for athletic exercise as for fresh air, tranquility, and rest places that are accessible at the noon hour. There is need of play facilities, for the children of the crowded streets as much as for those at the far edge of the South Side. And there is need at last of making available to the people of Binghamton, the comfortable enjoyment of that natural beauty which is the city's best asset.

If the five small parks described do not provide these things, even when supplemented by the two distant large parks, let us ask ourselves how they can be provided.

With regard to the athletic fields for operatives in the factories, it should be noted that these are not only desirable from a humanitarian and social standpoint, but are so worth while economically, in promoting the contentment and increasing the efficiency of labor, that they are frequently established and maintained at the private expense of large employers. From some points of view, this is much less desirable than their community provision; but it is a convincing evidence of their value. Obviously, such recreative fields should be located near the main industrial sections, and yet where shouting will not be a disturbance to home sections.

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

It will be recalled that three industrial districts were selected: one in the western part of the city, one in the center, and one at the north end. The two latter—Noyes Island and the district east of Upper State Street—are close together. It would be desirable to find, if possible, a good site for an athletic field that would be accessible to both. An ideal field can be found in precisely such



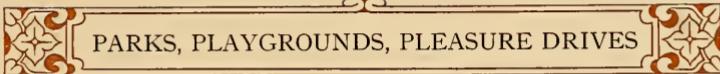
BETTER BINGHAMTON



location. This is just north of the race track, and is a low, level meadow already used for baseball. I append some photographs taken of it from different view points. These indicate the beauty of its outlook and its nearness to the factories and to the homes. In addition to these advantages, it has street car facilities through its proximity to State and Chenango Streets. It is sufficiently isolated and yet it is in such plain sight from State Street that it would be possible to watch the games from there. New and convenient entrances might be made to the grounds from State Street. Furthermore, the ground is of so little value for other purposes that it is inexpensive.

With reference to a site near the industrial section at the west end, it appeared to me that there were possibilities in the old brick yard north of the tracks. A good deal of filling would be necessary, but that is not expensive and does not take long.

With reference to the second need—tranquil rest places that would be of special benefit to the tired women workers—two interesting facts may be put side by side. Every part of the city has a river boundary. A broad, majestic, soothing river, flowing for the most part between banks fringed with trees, or that might be so fringed, and carrying—as rivers always do—a current of cool air.



PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

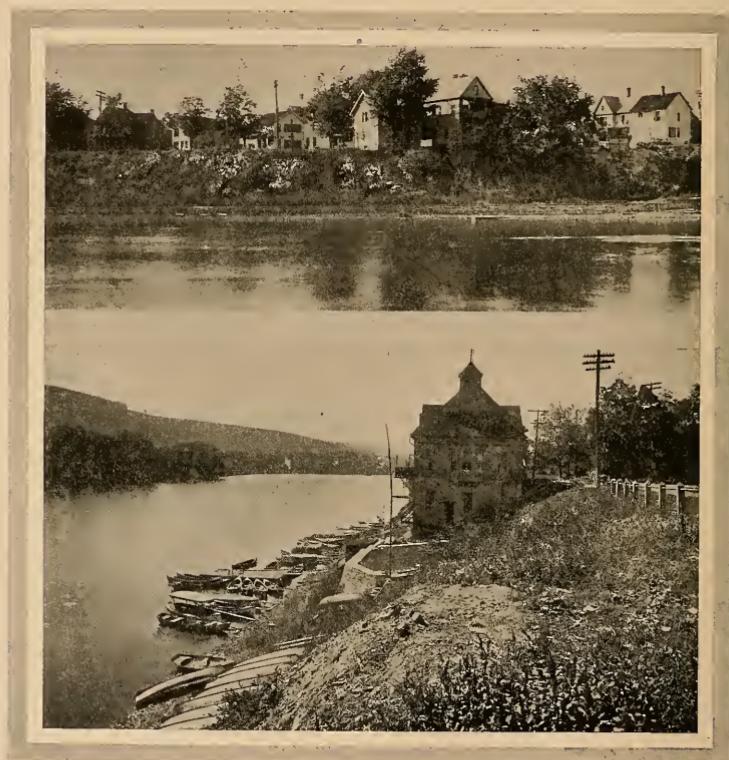
Beside this fact put this other, recalling that in Binghamton the percentage of women operatives is unusually large: "The most glaring excess of deaths from any one class of diseases in Binghamton is from diseases of the nervous system." It is clear that quite apart from æsthetic considerations, fact one and fact two may well be put together. Indeed, the opportunity which the city possesses in its rivers is extraordinary. Talk about conserving the waterpower of rivers, how much better is the conservation of human life, of civic health and happiness, and of human energy by making use of the rivers!

There are two other curious facts with regard to the possible improvement of the riverbanks which may well be put side by side. The first is that every one with whom I talked in Binghamton, or who sent communications to me, spoke of the riverbanks as the city's great æsthetic opportunity. The second fact is that among the municipal ordinances the only reference that I find to this great asset of the city is that garbage and the bodies of dead animals shall not be thrown upon the banks of the rivers. It would appear that the popular opinion is far in advance of municipal legislation. But that is a condition which never persists for long.

I find that the city's one ordinance with reference to the riverbanks is not well observed, and that at the time of the water carnival the people who watch the boating from the bank opposite the Remlik Club sit, if not in sackcloth, at least in ashes, which is an extraordinary way to sit for a carnival. But the riverbank situation is so well known in Binghamton and so fully appreciated, that the city may well be spared the humiliation of a public recital of present conditions. It will be more tactful at least to let the photographs do the speaking.

BETTER BINGHAMTON

Taking the north shore of the Susquehanna first, beginning opposite the Remlik Club near the Tompkins Street Bridge, let us proceed down stream.



PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

The views near the Exchange Street Bridge are interesting, as comprising the outlook from the new park which the city is constructing on the south bank. To these I append views from other cities, showing how the like conditions have been treated.



Give Nature half a chance and she will do her part to make even these banks beautiful



Looking north from the riverbank

Compare values created by present conditions with those a block away, as evidenced in high buildings

BETTER BINGHAMTON

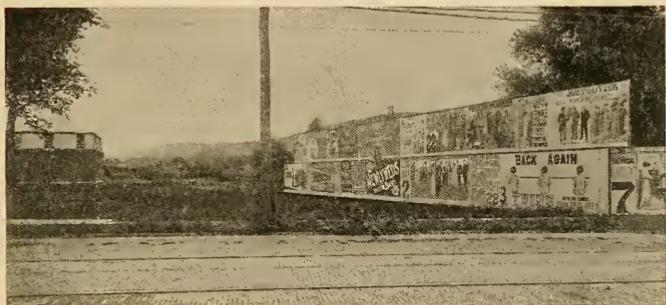
Little Ogdensburg has only a third of the population of Binghamton, and it has proportionately just as much riverfront, the heart of the city being—as in Binghamton—at the junction of two rivers. Yet, when I was called there to make suggestions for the improvement of the city, I found the riverbanks already for the most part beautified. What Ogdensburg so easily did with the sloping banks, Binghamton can do as well; while at the top of the bank, there is, in the existing streets, Emerson Place, South Street, and Wall Street, the chance to make such attractive river border walk and drive as Cambridge has constructed along the Charles. That the improvement of the abutting property would pay for all this is clear at a glance.

A riverbank in
Ogdensburg



The riverbank in
Cambridge, Mass.
Improvements extend
entirely through
the city

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES



North bank of the Susquehanna, looking east from Washington Street, Binghamton
This is only two blocks from Court Street



Photographed by J. Horace McFarland Co.

A city park on the bank of the Susquehanna at Harrisburg. Why not in Binghamton?

BETTER BINGHAMTON



The junction of the rivers—a beauty spot of historic interest at almost the geographical center of Binghamton. Its message to Binghamtonians.

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

As to the north shore of the Susquehanna, from the Tompkins Street Bridge to the Point, the pictures have told a story which every Binghamtonian can apply with appreciation of its practicability. It is amazing how easily and inexpensively the improvement can be made. In fact, there is no question that it will much more than pay for itself in the enhanced value of property. We have to remember, also, that the South Side riverbank park, now under construction from the Washington Street Bridge to above Exchange Street, is going to insure a pleasing outlook from a North Side park, while the converse of this—as already suggested—is that the North Side improvement is required, if for no other reason than to secure maximum results from the investment on the South Side. As a man would not put up a fine house and leave his grounds unimproved, so a city should not build a riverbank park and leave ash piles where people who are trying to enjoy the park must look at them.

One or two other points are to be noted. While it has been suggested that the improvement of the riverbanks in the simple and



Photographed by J. Horace McFarland Co.

Another view of the benefit the city of Harrisburg gains from the river

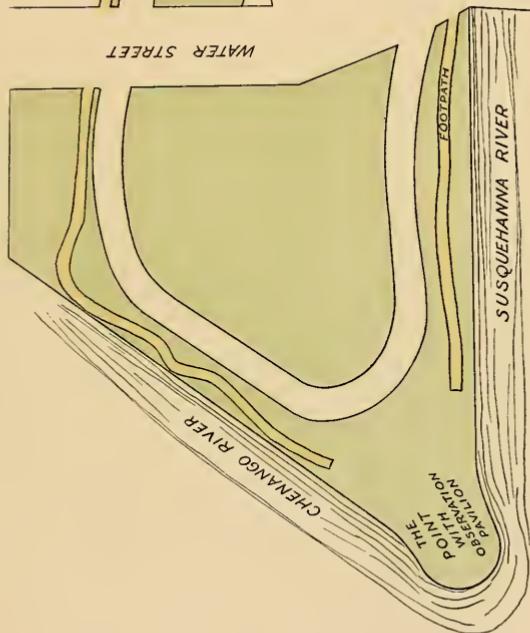
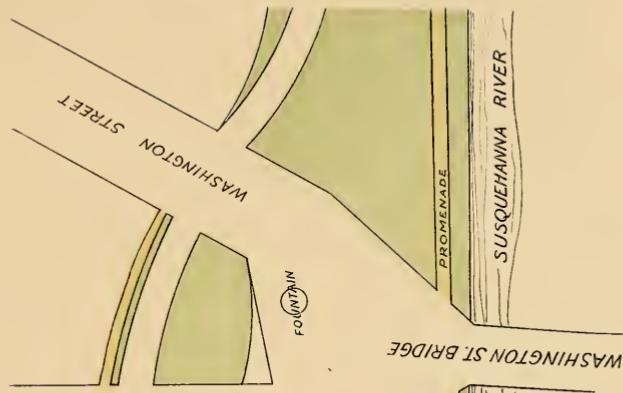
BETTER BINGHAMTON

inexpensive manner proposed would mean much to women operatives, its benefits would not by any means be confined to them. They are spoken of only because no other park improvement would do for them quite as much as would this. Every citizen, however, would enjoy the riverbanks, and I would urge that in the broad space available just east of Washington Street, there be developed a children's playground, north of the promenade and drive. It would be conveniently located, in a section that offers no other play facilities to children, and in its relative isolation it would so concentrate their activities at an unobjectionable point that the enjoyment by adults of all the rest of the strip of riverbank would be enhanced.



The Intersection of Water and Washington Streets, Binghamton

I append a sketch which gives an idea for the improvement of The Point and for the now very awkward intersection of Water and Washington Streets. My thought is that the drive, which will necessarily be close to the edge at South Street and Emerson Place, should here be far enough back to leave space for a footpath to wind pleasantly, amid low clumps of shrubbery, in full view of the rivers; that at the apex of The Point a circular outlook should be built up, with a stone parapet and seats around it; and that the greensward



PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

on Water Street, enclosed by the loop of the drive, should be left unbroken, unless, at some future time, a pioneer monument or historic tablet is placed there. Then the drive is to be carried across the two streets in pleasant fashion to continue the length of the riverside park east of Washington Street. Beyond Exchange Street, it would connect with South Street, and so proceed on existing thoroughfares—now, however, transformed by the park of which they would be boundary—to the Tompkins Street Bridge.

For the whole length of this park, as also through the park on the South Side of the river, there should be lights at near intervals along the promenade—a single globe on a concrete pillar. At night these will be reflected in the water, and from the opposite shore will gleam charmingly through the trees and amid the foliage, so stringing through the city a necklace of romance. Prosaically, also, lights are the best policemen. Finally, with the accomplishment of this riverbank improvement, there will appear the new value attaching to broadened and straightened Isbell Street, as the direct connection between the river park and the Court House Square.

With reference to the South Side of the Susquehanna, the photographs that follow best suggest its possibilities and the work that



View from Exchange St. Bridge, showing bed of the old canal—the site of the South Side Park

BETTER BINGHAMTON



Beginning of the South Side Park, near the Washington Street Bridge



Bed of old canal which is being filled for the park

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES



Site of South Side Park, looking west from New Street



Distant view showing trees on the site of the South Side Park



BETTER BINGHAMTON

is being done there. It is an admirable undertaking, worthy of the spirit that will remake Binghamton; and yet, of all the possible riverbank improvements in the city, this is the one which will, at once, benefit the smallest number of people and require the longest to complete. The city having ventured to undertake this, should not hesitate concerning the north bank project. Nor having made so good beginning on the South Side, should it fail to carry a drive at least along the big curve of the riverbank all the way to Tompkins Street, passing just back of the Remlik Club and so looping up the North Side drive. It is all open land—though the maps, we must hope prophetically, show such a drive laid out here. Eventually, it should be carried further up stream.

As to the banks of the Chenango, my attention was early called to a proposal for a drive on the West Side from Court Street down. It is not a plan that I would advocate. Thanks to the Front Street gardens, the city already has here, at no public cost, a stretch of beautiful riverbank—the only beautiful stretch it has. With much to be done for the city's improvement, it will be wiser to change the ugly into the beautiful than to try to better what is already pretty satisfactory. Moreover, there is some question in my mind whether the drive would be an improvement as seen from the East Side or from Court Street Bridge. Residents, in order to protect their property from trespass, would be likely to put up walls; and instead of the long stretches of tree shaded, sloping lawns, with informal waterline, now to be seen, there would be a spic and span retaining wall, a drive and then wall beyond. And even with the land a gift, it would be an expensive bit of work, with not half the popular benefit which the parking of the higher north bank of the Susquehanna would give.

The Chenango's East Side, however, is a very different proposition. Northward from the triangle at The Point, which I have proposed should be parked, Water Street runs so close to the river that it is inevitable that shacks, or very small houses, should be the only construction on the shallow lots. Another result, however, of the shallowness of the lots is that the land has slight value, so that the expenditure of a very little money would here go a long way in clearing the bank and improving Water Street. A low wall, with

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

sloping tree-fringed banks, the clearance of buildings from the strip along the top, and the construction of a footpath is all that is necessary. It would be desirable, of course, to carry the improvement all the way to Court Street; but that would be rather costly, and it is to be supposed that with the redemption of the rivers, and their dedication to public enjoyment, there will be created a public sentiment which will make impossible such disfigurement of the property in private hands as may be seen in the hideous signs that now form the leading feature of the view from Court Street Bridge.

Above Court Street, where Wall Street becomes the marginal thoroughfare, and there is no building space between street and river, improvements have been already authorized. But they fall far short of what they should have been—not through the failure of the city engineer to perceive what could be and should be done, but because of the meagreness of the appropriation. There was a chance to do here, at once—in carrying out the plan for a concrete retaining wall, topped by a balustrade, and straightened so as to reach the Ferry Street Bridge at or about its first pier—something permanent and fine; something that would not only have given ample returns immediately in social service, but that would have set a standard for the quality of other riverbank improvement work; that would have been an object lesson, educating to the public and encouraging other owners of property on the river shores to deed it to the city. It is a great pity that, at such a juncture, the course determined upon should have been picayune and villagelike, whether or not it happens to have been justified by a genuine need of economy.

Yet there is this to be said for the officials and people of Binghamton: there has been little inducement to expend money for the improvement of the riverbanks while the rivers have been open sewers. The public dumps, or sewage disposal and garbage reduction plants, are never chosen as sites for public parks, and those are the uses to which Binghamton has heretofore elected to put its majestic rivers and their naturally lovely shores. One must feel a good deal of sympathy with officials who found other and worthier uses for public money than the landscape development of such tracts, and for the public's failure to demand such improvements with an enthusiastic unanimity. But the old days are passing.

BETTER BINGHAMTON

Intercepting sewers are already under construction; the municipal collection of garbage and ashes is bound soon to come, and it will be the part of both wisdom and economy to recognize these sure developments of the near future by preparing for adjustment to new conditions. It has been excusable that the riverbanks have not been developed before; it will not be excusable when the streams are clear.

Adjustment to the new conditions will not, however, be complete if we stop at simply the improvement of the banks. Even as a landscape picture, there will be need of more artistic bridges to



Type of Bridges now in use

join the beautiful banks together. The use of reinforced concrete has made beauty in bridge building almost as easy to secure as ugliness, and has made the cost about the same.

Of still more utilitarian advantage will be the deepening of channels or the raising of the water level so that the rivers may be more used for boating. It is useless, of course, to go elaborately into that until the streams are freed from sewage; but when this is done, the riverbank parks will be rendered far more useful, as well as made more attractive, by the development of boating on the river. The question, with its technical aspects of water rights,

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

style of dam and dam location, scarcely belongs to the study of the city plan, beyond the point of indicating how greatly such development will add to the park facilities of Binghamton, to the attractiveness of the city and to the increase of the legitimacy of its claim as a pleasant place for residence. All this will mean increased population, enlarged and better labor supply and greater prosperity.

The park needs of the center of the city will be pretty well cared for by the riverbank improvements. On the outskirts, as country pleasure grounds, there are Ross and Ely Parks, one to the north



A river bridge in Waterloo, Ia., a city of just half the population of Binghamton
The photograph is taken from a similar concrete bridge one block further up stream

and the other to the south. There will not be need of a great deal more. Even in the matter of children's playgrounds, we have suggested that the riverbank park east of Washington Street gives space for such provision on a scale that should be sufficient for the center of the city. On the South Side, the Kent Playground has been already set aside; in the Northwest, there should be a ground where the Slovac children would have chance to play. No park is easily accessible to them, and there seems to be an excellent site for a playground on a low knoll just west of Jarvis Street, back



BETTER BINGHAMTON

from Clinton, and with a school across the way. Doubtless many another good site can be found, if this is not available. So, too, in the Northeast, if an industrial quarter should be developed as proposed, a children's playground should surely be included in any model subdivision for the housing of employees east of the railroads.

But of coincident importance with the provision of the playground space, and more important than the provision of equipment, is competent directorship. There should be no more thought of creating a children's playground and not providing for its supervision than there would be of building a school and not providing teachers. In fact, the two actions would be very similar. Nor do we even expect churches, for all their solemnity of purpose and sober minded clientele, to be successful without ministers.

On the fast growing West Side, in the great area bounded on the north by the railroads and on the east and the south by the rivers, there is no real park; and yet here are more homes than in any other section of Binghamton. Happily, a beautiful park site in the center of this area has not yet been built upon, although the homes entirely surround it. This is the oak grove known as the Bennett tract. Relatively, this will be expensive ground to buy for a park—that being the penalty for delay in not having secured it a few years ago. But with reference to its expense there are these things to consider: the city needs to buy very little other park land, and that little is of low value; the tract is the last considerable wooded one in anything like the center of the section; it will give neighborhood park service to a district that is able to pay a good price for what it wants and that can receive such service from no existing park; it is well adapted topographically to the sort of development appropriate to its neighborhood; and, finally, a few years delay will advance its price as much beyond present figures—if not, indeed, putting it entirely beyond reach, through subdivision into eagerly bought up building lots—as the present figures are in advance of those of the past.

On the East Side, there is Howard "Park," also of strictly neighborhood significance. This will serve its function by clipped lawns as already mentioned, and benches under well spaced trees. A jet fountain would be attractive.

PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

With reference to Ely and Ross Parks, it is difficult to know what to write. They are two superbly situated pleasure grounds, of a natural beauty that is, perhaps, surpassed by no other city parks in the United States. One is all in the raw—undeveloped, with the chance to make almost anything of it. The other has had some good roads put through it and then, in so far as it has received intensive development, has been desecrated almost to the point of ruin. Many pages of my note book have been filled with comment; but, after all, discussion of the work in these parks hardly belongs to a city plan study. The need is that a competent landscape architect be retained, to draw up an appropriate scheme of de-

velopment for each park, which can be worked out gradually.

There are some fine things, aside from natural scenery, even in Ross Park—as the Look-out, the Pinewoods, the road along the rock ledge, etc. The greatest cities of the world might be glad to have such possessions as these in their parks. But the park wants defense against red lamp posts with white tops, against blood red flower pots, against unspeakably crude white buildings



A road through the woods near the summit of Ely Park

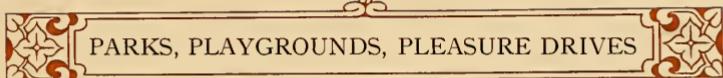


BETTER BINGHAMTON

jumbled together, and against that whole attitude of mind which would utilize a sylvan retreat for minstrel shows, vaudeville and circus-like restaurants—just as Ely Park needs access roads of easy grade, and to be defended from some of the structures that there intrude. Not that a method of development for these parks, more rational and characterized by a finer feeling, would lessen their popular service. Rather, it would heighten that service and simplify it. Could there, for instance, have been found a less good location for the swings in Ross Park than that in which they have been placed; or could the barn at Ely Park have been made a more conspicuous feature of a park landscape? In these two parks, the city already owns land that presents an extraordinary opportunity, and their natural beauty is so great that there is no pressing necessity to spend large sums of money upon them. But there is need that money be spent properly.

More closely connected with the city plan is the matter of the accessibility of Ely and Ross Parks. Front and Mygatt Streets are to be considered as natural approaches to Ely Park, and if, as I suppose, the landscape architect shall find it possible to plan a drive of easy grade westward from the park, to connect with the ravine near Glenwood Cemetery and so reach the level of the rising streets, Glenwood Avenue may be another approach. Doubtless, too, a drive is possible around the eastern side of the hill—offering wonderful views of the city and the river valleys—which would gradually get down to the lower end of Ridge Street and so to Prospect.

As for approaches to Ross Park, DeRussey Street, with its fine view, its directness, and its fortunate offering of a chance to get into the park above the claptrap development around the end of the park carline, has the making of a fine parkway. There are beautiful house sites at its upper end, the street can be sufficiently widened to have wide grass borders between walk and curb and made a really handsome avenue. Then, driving through the upper portion of the park, one may come out on a country road that runs eastward. This, after a time and some turns, connects with upper Mill Street and so descends into the city again, completing a loop which is a scenic drive indeed. It is a pity that Park Avenue, also, has not been made more of. A simple improvement here, counting



PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, PLEASURE DRIVES

for much, would separate the car tracks from the roadway by a neat concrete curbing; and would clear the creek walls and the fences beyond of signs. Further up, where the cars reach the park, the change from turf to cinders between the rails should not be made. It was a strange place, indeed, to make such a change.

The instance may be noted not only for itself, but as an illustration of a mental attitude which Binghamton must outgrow. The spirit that fears to spend any money, that saves cents at the sacrifice of dollars of results, that actually boasts of the smallness of the sum spent by bond issues for public improvements, never yet made a city which attracted people as good to live in and to do business in. Binghamton appropriates none too much for the admirable little Public Library, but it gives half as much again to that as it appropriates in a year for all its parks! It enacts an ordinance which prohibits people from throwing garbage, etc., on the riverbanks, and provides no adequate alternative; it accepts streets that run within a few feet of the riverbank and then stop short. Had such streets been carried through, the city might long before this have had pleasant outlook points at least, and the connection of Susquehanna and LeRoy Streets by a convenient bridge, creating a new and needed cross town thoroughfare, would have been a simple and inexpensive matter.

But the old order is surely changing. The very demand for this Report would be evidence of that, even were there not other proof in the plans for improved lighting, in the order that wires shall be removed from Court Street, in the building of intercepting sewers, in the improved curbing that accompanies the Main Street paving work, in the plans for the new High School. There is to be a Better Binghamton; but we must make sure that it is better enough—that the point of view is big, the courage strong.

One of the most prominent and influential men in Binghamton told me in personal conversation that while he and a few others felt that the city should do as much as I have suggested; and that, although the city's borrowing capacity was so great that bonds might easily be issued for the expense of the work, the town was yet so unimaginative, so timid and backward, that the very proposal would evoke a popular storm. I believe that he and his friends are



BETTER BINGHAMTON

not as lonely as he fancies in their public spirit, that there are many of like courage, that the past is a closed chapter even now, that Binghamton has awakened to a higher hope and confidence than it has had since the days of the early pioneers.

Even in all the foregoing pages, I have not suggested all that might be done in Binghamton. For example, it will be the part of discretion to plan now for the drive that is likely to be ultimately wanted down the north bank of the Susquehanna, westward from Front Street. It ought to extend as far as the proposed sewage disposal plant. It would be expensive to construct to-day, but the time can be foreseen when the city will think it worth its cost, the long dyke not only making a handsome drive, but bringing more building land into market and developing beautiful house sites. There is need to expend for it now little or nothing, except forethought, for it is not unlikely that wise property holders would be willing to dedicate the necessary strip.

Nor are the plans proposed inflexible. No city plan should be that, for it looks ahead to a time when conditions now unforeseen may have developed. But I have tried to point out the immediately important, and those easy things that will give large results which must encourage. And especially I have tried to indicate the point of view which should be taken—the long look ahead, the faith in the city, as a corporation greater than any within its borders, the courage, and everywhere the sense of fitness and respect for the social conscience. You can't have a Better Binghamton without good Binghamtonians.

IV. Ways and Means

Ways and Means



ON concluding a Report on the improvement possibilities of a city, there is no question which can be so pertinently asked as this: How can the recommendations be carried out?

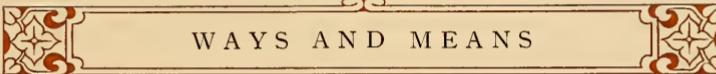
There are some things, of course, that can be done only by doing them—directly, frankly, and at a cost which we must hope that the results will justify. There are other improvements, however,—and their number is really surprising—which can be accomplished through ordinances which nearly everybody will approve of. That is to say, intelligent enactments on certain matters, which had before been overlooked or too little esteemed, will correct the evils or secure betterments automatically, and at no cost whatever. There is a third group of improvements for the provision of which, at this time, it is perfectly proper to look to private initiative; and finally there remain a few matters that may call for legislative action, as requiring a charter amendment.

Happily, the very long list of "Elementary Needs" can be largely secured automatically, through ordinances. These include such important matters as uniformity in curbs, gutters and sidewalks on a given street, and the better construction of them; the municipal collection of garbage and ashes; the enforcement of the projecting sign ordinance, or its betterment by a prohibition of any daytime projecting signs—since electric signs can be put on hinges that will fold them back against the buildings during daylight hours—and the removal of sidewalk obstructions from the crowded business streets. If to wisely framed and carefully enforced ordinances to cover these points, we add the gradual reduction of the pole and wire nuisance, and the installation of a better lighting system—both of which are now under way—the appearance of Binghamton will be remarkably improved without terrifying even a niggardly taxpayer or resorting to a bond issue. Would it not be good work for the Mercantile-Press Club to give expression to, and if need be to create, the public demand for these enactments, of which there are innumerable precedents in the ordinances of other cities?

A step beyond the ordinances which cover these elementary points, would be one to prohibit the erection of factories in designated residence districts. This enactment is very common in Europe, and is now being adopted by various American cities—progressive Los Angeles is an example. Its merit is that it safeguards a residence section from an intrusion that is unwelcome to the householders and detrimental to the value of their property. Conversely, in limiting factories to certain districts, it hastens the creation of industrial sections where everything can be done to promote factory efficiency. Again, the present building height limit of 125 feet—the maximum allowed in even the most congested part of Boston, and of course much higher than in the great cities of Europe—were better reduced. Members of the Mercantile-Press Club, secure in their aeroplane height, may feel some diffidence about promoting such a modification, but there are four points which the Binghamtonian on the street may well consider:

- 1, Very high buildings induce street congestion. All tall buildings pour their population into the street and draw it from the street at approximately the same hour, and the streets in the business portion of Binghamton are not wide enough to stand many such high buildings as that in which the Mercantile-Press Club is located.
- 2, A lower height limit will tend to increase the value of all property outside the area of a couple of blocks around the Court House. This is because business, unable to concentrate in three or four buildings, spreads over a larger section. In so doing it displaces other occupants, and so the rings of pressure widen out to affect favorably all property.
- 3, Tall buildings tend to reduce streets to sunless chasms, where all the pleasing relation between void and solid—street and building—is destroyed. A street so lined can never be artistically pleasing, while gusts of wind, eddying around the buildings, make it uncomfortable.
- 4, Binghamton will never be attractive to people because it is like New York. It would be much wiser not to try to ape the metropolis, but to be its own best self, sitting calmly and prosperously amid its hills.

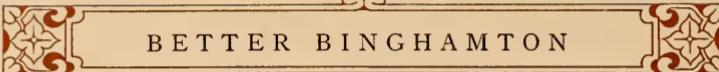
Considerable achievements of a constructive sort, in the way of city planning, can be accomplished by ordinance. These, if the measures shall commend themselves to thoughtful judgment, include



WAYS AND MEANS

the establishment of building lines on Isbell Street and on the east side of Chenango Street, by which those thoroughfares can be widened at practically no expense; they include the safeguarding of the grades of future highways, by the naming of a maximum grade which cannot be exceeded by any street that the Council may be asked to accept; the rescinding, or at least amending, of the ordinance that now names a minimum width, which on some occasions is undoubtedly an unjust hardship; and an official approval of more flexibility in the proportioning of the space on the street into sidewalk and roadway—these changes being conditional, however, upon constructive legislation that will lodge the control of such matters securely in competent official hands, so as not to leave it with the individual property owner. If, in the newly awakened interest in planning with foresight for the future Binghamton, the people are willing to go far enough, it would be best to secure legislative authority for the creation of an official City Plan Commission, to look after these and other matters concerned with the extension of the city's streets and with its internal physical development. Scranton has just secured from the Legislature such a Commission. So has Salem, Mass., to point to a smaller city; and Hartford, Conn., has gained distinction for some years through the successfulness of one. The Commissions are sprinkled widely through the West; Buffalo is demanding one, and Pittsburgh gained one at the same time as did Scranton.

Similarly, while various ordinances, permissive and prohibitive, can do much to safeguard the street trees and to improve them, the best measure would be the creation of the office of city forester, and the appointment to it, with power and suitable appropriation, of a man of scientific training. It is to be observed that the city charter now gives to the Council (Title III, Sec. 30) all the authority over the street trees that could be required. The only need is that the expert, who has had special training with reference to street trees, be appointed to act for the Council in exercising this authority. There are most encouraging precedents for this action, from the littlest New England town's tree warden to big Chicago's city forester. In expressing, or if need be in fostering, public sentiment in favor of it, the women's clubs might very fittingly take prominent part.



BETTER BINGHAMTON

For I would have the whole community pull together for the Better Binghamton. Only in that way, indeed, can it be lastingly secured.

As to the improvements for which at this time the city can properly look to private initiative, in the public spirit and voluntary service of individuals and organizations, I would call upon the women to start the improvement of schoolyards. Many yards ought to be larger—it is folly to put the fine new High School on so small a lot—and nearly all can be made more beautiful without loss of play space. In fact, the children themselves should be enlisted in the movement, securing some of the plants and tending them. Mothers and teachers have most successfully interested children in this matter elsewhere, and with gratifying results in quite unlooked for directions—as in the redemption of home gardens. For example, again, in an instance of which I have knowledge, permission to dig in the school garden changed an incorrigible lad into the model pupil. Every season small prizes can be offered for the best kept schoolyard or for the most improvement. As to the size of schoolyards, that is no more a matter of guess work or of convenience than is the size of the building—in fact, it is less so. When a schoolhouse is built to accommodate a certain number of pupils, there is exact knowledge of the number of children for whom play space must be provided, and authorities have generally agreed that the minimum of such provision should be thirty square feet per child.

The provision of athletic grounds for the recreation of factory employees, I would put up to the manufacturers, at a time when the city has so many other things to do; and for the equipment of the grounds I should look to the men. Both sides may anticipate such immediate personal gain in the action, that it is not unfair to let them prove, by experiment, the worth of the provision. But there must be no taint of charity in the manufacturer's action. The grounds secured should be deeded to the city for the purpose named, and the use of them open to all employees.

As to the playgrounds for little children, private philanthropy has already given one to Binghamton, and there are a couple of other lots where they are suffered to amuse themselves. But it is found advisable usually to form a playground association which shall



WAYS AND MEANS

make the championship of the children's interests its special purpose. This has most successfully a membership of both men and women. In Binghamton, besides securing the Washington Street and Slovac grounds, as additions to the present possessions, it might well direct its energies to the proper equipment of the playgrounds and, especially, to their administration. The latest pamphlet report issued by one of the strongest of such associations says: "Having a right director is probably 90 per cent. of a playground's effective service to a community, letting ten per cent. represent the equipment." To considerable degree, playground care can be gained by voluntary service—in story telling, gymnastic instructions, etc.—and this might be provided from the membership of the association; but there still will be need of trained and salaried supervisors, whom the association can provide by inviting subscriptions until such time as the municipality, convinced of their value by the given object lesson, is ready and able to sustain them.

Moreover, for sculptural adornment, or for the historic tablet which was suggested for The Point, it is proper to look to private munificence or to the action of an organization—as to a historical or patriotic society, or to a musical society for the adornment of the triangle on Mendelssohn Street. Thus much may be done in many ways to make Binghamton better—to live in, work in, and look at—without increasing the debt, if only the citizens pull together.

There are in Binghamton a great many tenements that look like death traps—both from the fire and sanitary point of view. If they are not as bad as they look, they still are much too bad for a city the size of Binghamton, where the tenement ought to be as rare as a mosque. Perhaps most of them were erected before the present building code became operative; or perhaps the code is not strictly enforced or there is not enough supervision. At all events this Report would issue word of warning against the tenements. Dr. Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard, began a recent letter with the words, "Bad housing is the fundamental evil in all cities, for it develops many physical and moral evils." He closed it with the words, "In my observation, enforcement is what is most needed in regard to all legislation for the promotion of

BETTER BINGHAMTON

sanitation and morality." It might be well to consider that letter as addressed to Binghamtonians.

With reference to the establishment of the park system—this phrase including the acquisition of playgrounds, the redemption of the riverbanks, the improvement of existing parks, and the trans-



This tenement, not seeming quite as bad as some others, is selected as a fair illustration

formation of some streets—there is no reason why even that work should prove a burden. A comfortable and most effective way of financing such improvements is now in operation in a great many cities, and always I believe with popular approval as well as with success from the park standpoint. To cite a concrete instance, I will take Denver, though there is some variation of detail in different cities.

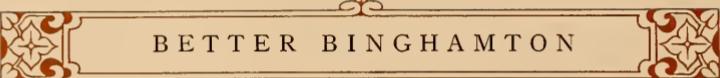


WAYS AND MEANS

By a charter amendment which became effective June 1, 1904, the Park Department became a distinct department of the Denver municipal government. It was given a minimum levy in the annual tax assessment of 1.3 mills, and the money collected under this levy is annually placed to the credit of the Park Fund, no portion of it, whether used during the fiscal year or not, ever returning to the general fund. Out of this Park Fund the maintenance and improvement of the parks is taken care of. Nobody feels a mill tax, or grudges that item—in fact, for the last two or three years Denver's park levy has been two mills, instead of the minimum, and some cities make it as high as four mills, though this of course is optional with the people. An advantage is that the Park Department knows just how much it can count upon; that it can plan its work accordingly, without being subject to a sudden chopping off of appropriation by the Council; that with the growth of population and increasing demand upon the parks, the sum available for maintenance is gradually rising, automatically; and that any increase of property value resulting from park work is promptly and justly reflected in increased park funds.

But further, and this is a very important factor where, as in Binghamton, there is new, creative, park work to be done, the Denver charter divides the city into four park districts. These park districts have the power, if their population so vote, to purchase lands for parks and parkways by bond issues, the bonds being issued separately by the separate districts and being district, not general, liens. Not a cent of park money raised by a bond issue in one park district can be used for the purchase of parks in another district. In other words, the people in any particular section decide for themselves just what they want and are willing to pay for in the way of parks.

Suppose in Binghamton there were four districts, corresponding to the natural divisions of the city—the South Side; the section north of the Susquehanna and east of the Chenango, south of the railroads; the section north of the Susquehanna and west of the Chenango, south of railroads; and the section north of the railroads. With comparatively little wealth on the South Side, there is happily need there of comparatively little expenditure. The people would



BETTER BINGHAMTON

probably approve of completing the South Side riverbank park, and later on, as the population and means on that side increase, as the interest in park work grows and the section loyalty is more vigorous, it would not be surprising if—with appreciation of the direct effect on local values—they authorized the transformation of DeRussey Street into a parkway and the improvement of Park Avenue. On the North Side, east of the Chenango, where the presence of the business district establishes the largest assessable values in the city, and where there are no other expenditures for parks, we may anticipate that the purchase of The Point and then the improvement of the riverbanks would be authorized without hesitation. West of the Chenango, the suggested purchase of Bennett "Park" and the development of Grand Boulevard to fit its name are exactly the kinds of projects to appeal to the owners of the high class residence property of that section. In the fourth district, where again resources are more limited, there would be need of creating little at present except playgrounds, which is the sort of improvement that would most benefit and interest the people there. Eventually, perhaps, there would be local approval of reserving Pope's Ravine or Highland Glen as a balance to scenic drives to Ely Park.

The voluntariness of the action taken by the several districts removes the quality of irksomeness; while the park rivalry between different sections and the localness of the projects is found always to lead to much greater action than when park questions are matters left to the decision of the city as a whole. For instance, it is conceivable that if, in Binghamton, the matter of purchasing Bennett "Park" were submitted to the vote of all the people in the city, the lack of personal interest in it on the South Side and the East Side and north of the railroads might defeat it, while, if the matter were left to the West Side south of the railroads, where direct enjoyment and benefit would be gained from the expenditure, it might easily carry. So of each improvement. Again, there should be note of the fitness of purchasing park lands by district bond issue—that is, of letting posterity pay some of the cost of improvements that will grow steadily in value and service as the years pass, and so will be worth to posterity more—whether measured as a capital investment or as an income producing investment, of which the

WAYS AND MEANS

dividends are enjoyment and health—than they can be worth at the time of purchase.

There is need of adding little more to the Report. I have tried to make it not only comprehensive in its scope, but concrete and definite in its suggestions. No words, perhaps, can more pertinently close it than these, written by the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of Petersburg: "The reproach of being unpractical attaches not to those who insist on efforts to remove abuses, but to those who are credulous enough to suppose that abuses and wasteful ways of doing things will remove themselves." The Mercantile-Press Club has shown in the past, and I am confident will now lead in showing, that Binghamtonians are not as credulous as that, nor are content to forego progress.

Respectfully submitted,



August 30th, 1911.



Binghamton from Ely Park



The beautiful Susquehanna

BINGHAMTON TO-DAY



ADDENDA

"BETTER BINGHAMTON" is published solely in the interests of Binghamton.

Its purpose is to acquaint the people of Binghamton with the expert's practical plan for the proper and systematic development of our city.

The advantages of pursuing a definite, concrete, farsighted policy in relation to civic improvements are so apparent that any discussion of this question appears unnecessary. It is plainly a common sense, business proposition and, as such, must appeal to every tax payer and resident of our city.

The Binghamton Plan stands on its own merits. It is not final nor unalterable by any means. Conditions may change. But its underlying principles will remain the same and unquestionably lay the foundation for a Better Binghamton. To know this plan is to accord it your unqualified support.

If there is need of further incentive, it will be found in the strong attractions which Binghamton already possesses. These are many and varied.

We believe it not unwise to detail some of these important features feeling that it will not only serve to quicken local appreciation but also prove of more than ordinary interest to non-residents, into whose hands this book may fall.

GEO. C. SALMON, *Chairman.*

FRANK H. BEACH,

CLARENCE L. MEACHAM,

Publication Committee.

ADDENDA

Population, City and Suburbs.....	54,904
Area of City, Square Miles; Land 9.24, Water .76.....	10
Parks, Acres.....	224.2
Railroads.....	5
Erie; Delaware & Hudson; Delaware, Lackawanna & Western; Utica Division of D. L. & W. R. R.; Syracuse Division of the D. L. & W. R. R.	
Electric Railway, Miles.....	42.91
Paved Streets, Miles.....	13.31
Good Roads leading out of City, Miles.....	35.38
Water Mains, Miles.....	92
Public Sewers, Miles.....	59.05
Fire Hydrants.....	900
Gas Mains, Miles.....	65
Telephones operated in City.....	6800
Street Lights.....	1574
Schools, Public 17, Private 6.....	23
Pupils.....	8301
Public Library, Volumes.....	25,000
Churches.....	44
Hospitals, Public 2, Private 3.....	5
*Factories.....	266
*Capital Invested.....	\$14,214,000.00
*Products, Value of.....	\$17,114,000.00
*Employes, Salaried Officials.....	935
*Employes, Wage Earners.....	6045
Salaries and Wages.....	\$4,145,000.00
Newspapers, Daily 3, Weekly 1.....	4
Department Stores.....	7
Banks.....	5
Total Capital and Surplus.....	\$1,551,757.57
Trust Companies.....	1
Capital and Surplus.....	\$300,000.00
Clearing House Business 1910.....	\$25,040,600.00
Passenger Trains in and out of the City Daily.....	71
Death Rate 1910, Average per M.....	18.03
Less deaths and population at Binghamton State Hospital, 16.57.	
†Tax Rate, City, State and County, 1910.....	24.50
Assessed Valuation.....	\$25,171,288.00
Residences.....	6500

*1909 Census Department, Commerce and Labor of United States.

†Contrary to the almost universal custom among cities, Binghamton pays one-half cost of sidewalks and curbs, one-half cost of pavements, less amount assessed against Street Railway Company, and the excess cost of letting sewers.



B. F. WELDEN, President



W. J. MOON, Vice-President



C. W. YEOMANS, Secretary and Treasurer



C. L. MEACHAM, Executive Secretary

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE OF "BETTER BINGHAMTON"



GEO. C. SALMON, Chairman



FRANK H. BEACH



C. L. MEACHAM



C. W. BENNETT



E. N. ABBOTT



WILLIS SHARPE KILMER



F. J. BAYLESS



DANA B. HINMAN



HIRAM GOLDSMITH



FRANK H. BEACH



HAROLD L. HART



ROBT. H. ROSE



J. B. HADSELL, Jr.



FRANK E. HARRIS



ALONZO ROBERSON



MEETING ROOM



READING ROOM



LOBBY

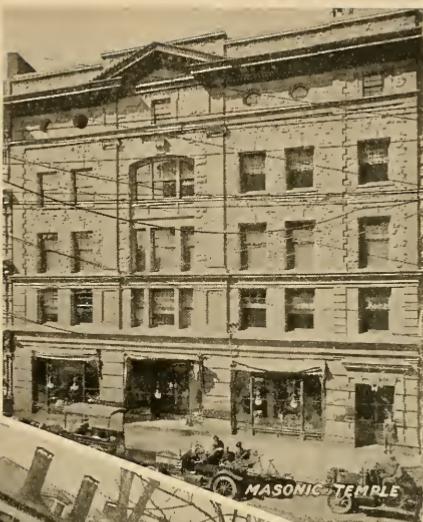


SECRETARY'S OFFICE



TEA ROOM

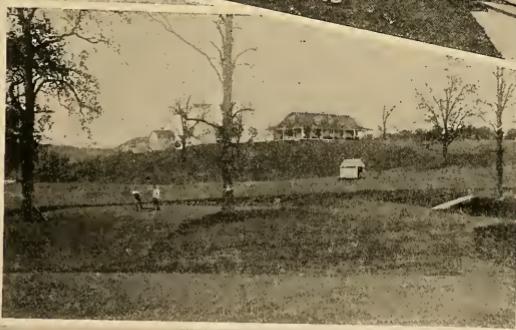
VIEWS IN MERCANTILE-PRESS CLUB, BINGHAMTON



HOMES OF BINGHAMTON CLUBS AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS



HOMES OF BINGHAMTON CLUBS AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS



BINGHAMTON'S OUTDOOR CLUBS



BINGHAMTON'S PUBLIC BUILDINGS



BINGHAMTON'S PUBLIC BUILDINGS



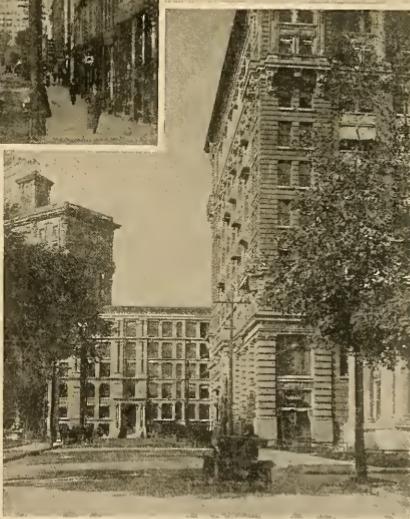
ONE OF BINGHAMTON'S NATURAL BEAUTY SPOTS—ROSS PARK



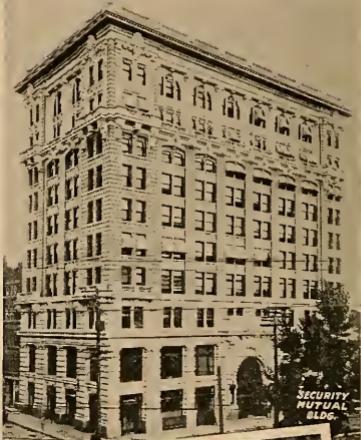
ANOTHER PUBLIC PLAYGROUND FOR BINGHAMTONIANS



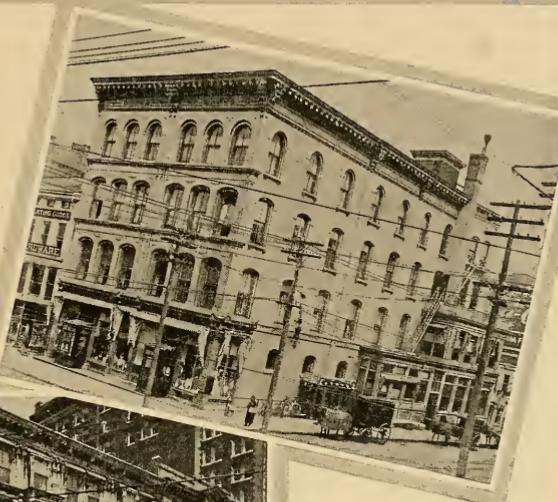
BUSINESS SECTION OF BINGHAMTON



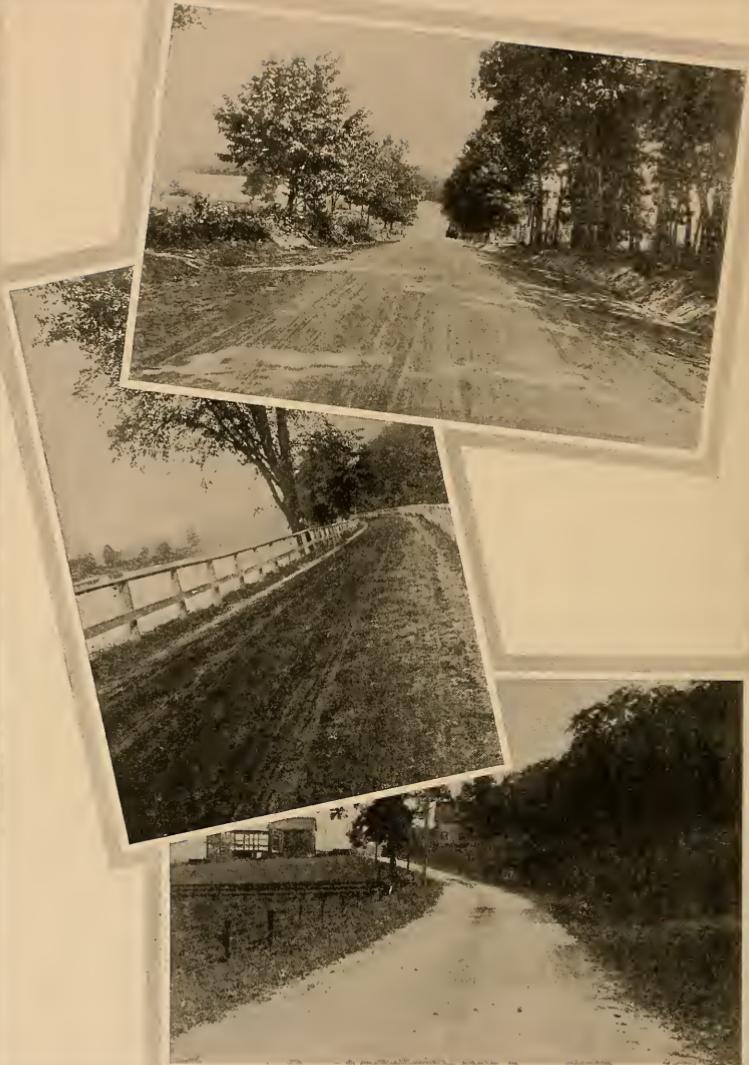
BUSINESS SECTION OF BINGHAMTON



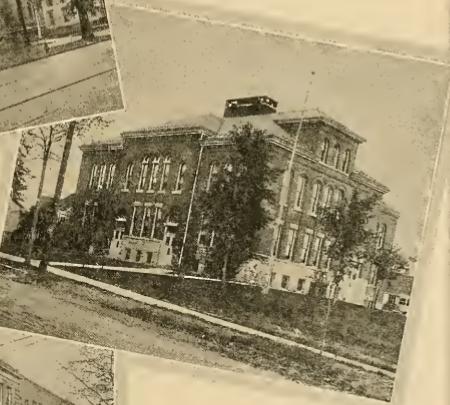
OFFICE BUILDINGS IN BINGHAMTON



BINGHAMTON'S DEPARTMENT STORES



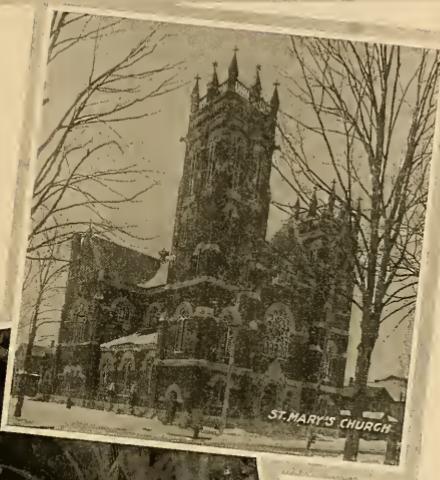
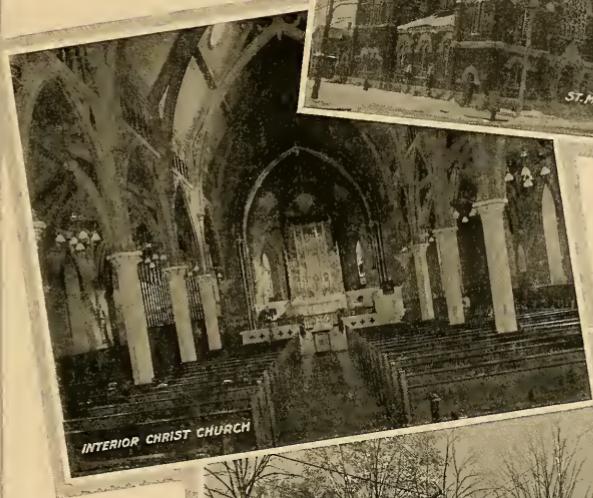
OVER 80 MILES MACADAM ROADS IN BROOME COUNTY—ALL LEAD TO BINGHAMTON



SEVENTEEN SCHOOLS LIKE THESE CARE FOR THE YOUTHFUL BINGHAMTONIANS



SOME OF BINGHAMTON'S CHURCHES



SOME OF BINGHAMTON'S CHURCHES



PUBLIC HOSPITALS



ORPHANS' HOMES, HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS



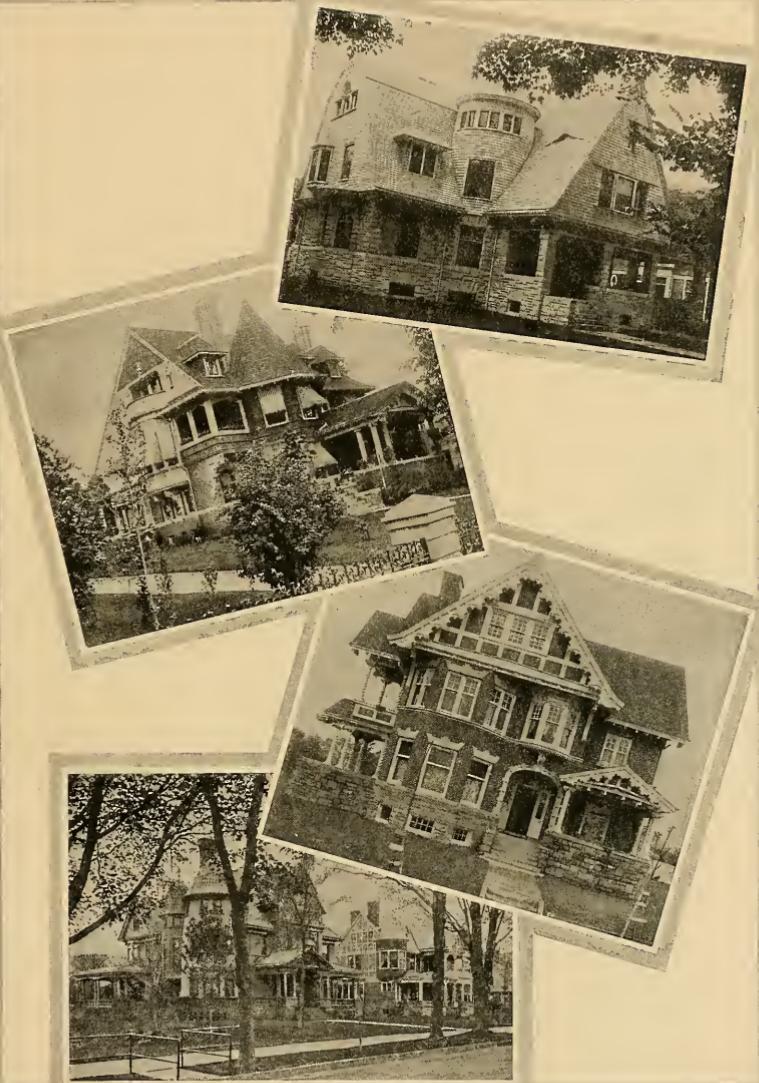
RESIDENCE STREETS IN BINGHAMTON



RESIDENCE STREETS IN BINGHAMTON



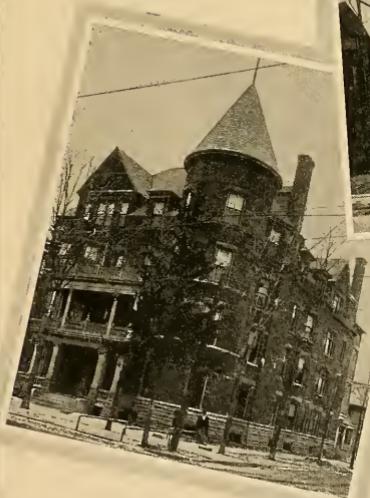
HOMES IN BINGHAMTON



HOMES IN BINGHAMTON



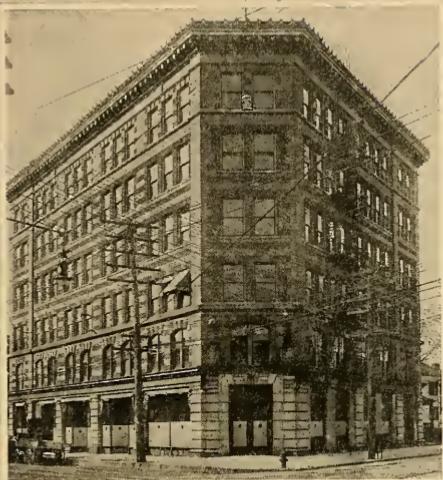
HOMES IN BINGHAMTON



BINGHAMTON'S APARTMENT HOUSES



WHOLESALE AND MANUFACTURING BUILDINGS



WHOLESALE AND MANUFACTURING BUILDINGS



RAILWAY FACILITIES AND FACTORIES OF BINGHAMTON



WAREHOUSES AND FACTORIES OF BINGHAMTON



BINGHAMTON'S MANUFACTURING PLANTS

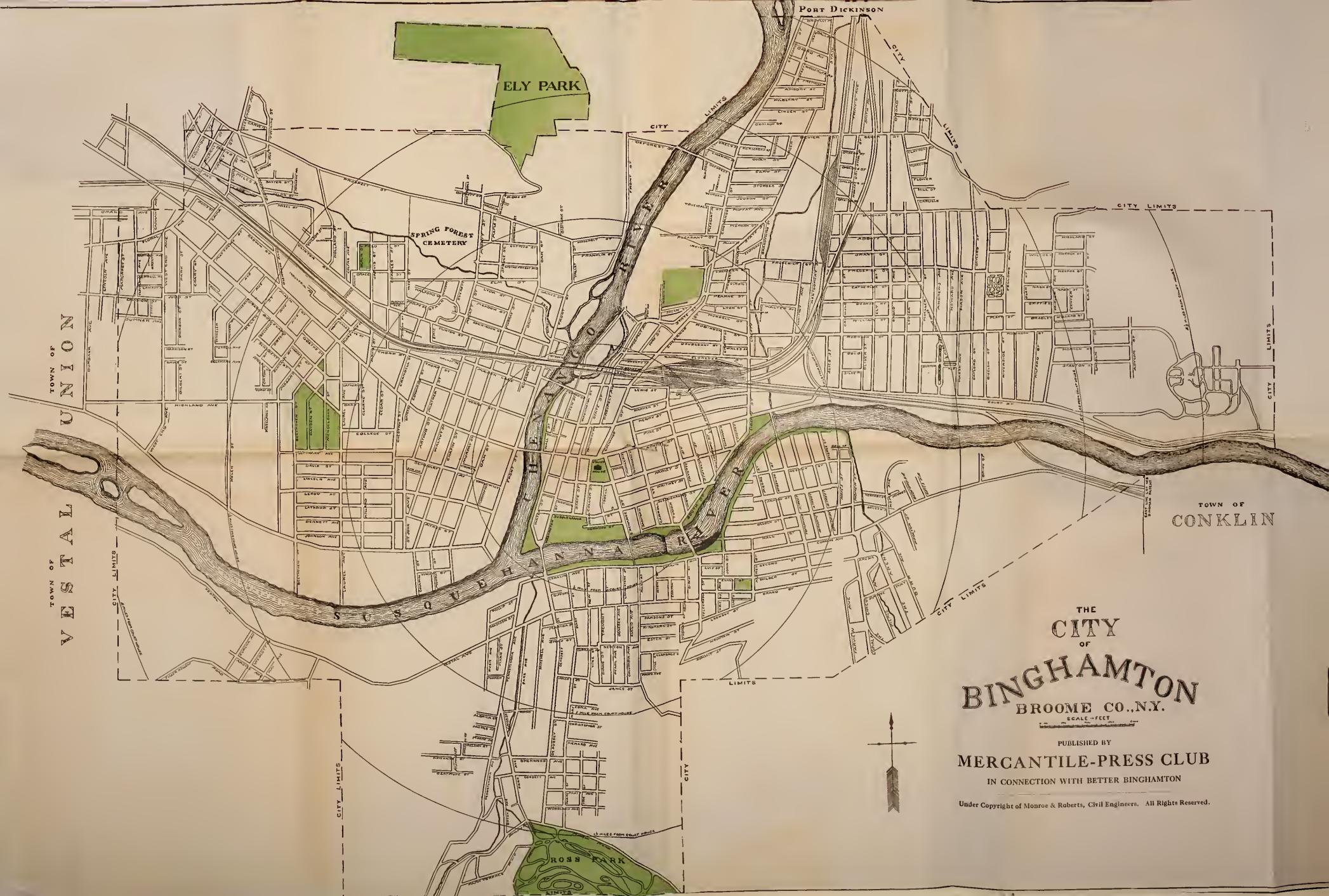
FEB 5 1912



F129
B4 R65

LEADERS

FEB 5 1912



THE
CITY
OF
BINGHAMTON
BROOME CO., N.Y.

SCALE - FEET

PUBLISHED BY
MERCANTILE-PRESS CLUB

IN CONNECTION WITH BETTER BINGHAMTON

Under Copyright of Monroe & Roberts, Civil Engineers. All Rights Reserved.

БИБЛІОТЕКА УДАРНОГО СОВЕТУ СІЛЬСЬКОХІДНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ

ІЗДАВАЄ КОЛЛЕКЦІЮ КНИГІВ

МЕКСИКАНІЧЕСЬКІ СПІ

БІБЛІОТЕКА

БІБЛІОТЕКА
ІЗДАВАЄ КНИГІ
МОДЕМАНДО
СІЛА
ІЗДАВАЄ КНИГІ



APR. 78

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

BOUND BY

HJM

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 222 135 4

